



The Fourth Estate: The Impact of Mass Communications on Defense Systems Acquisition Decision Making



JANUARY 2002

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**THE FOURTH ESTATE:
THE IMPACT OF
MASS COMMUNICATIONS ON
DEFENSE SYSTEMS ACQUISITION
DECISION MAKING**

First Edition

**A GUIDE FOR
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
SYSTEMS ACQUISITION MANAGERS**

Robert F. Delaney

JANUARY 2002



**DEFENSE ACQUISITION UNIVERSITY PRESS
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DISCLAIMER

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“It is a closed shop from top to bottom posturing under the illusion of openness.”

Alan L. Freed
Chr., Alan L. Freed Associates
Director of Executive Seminars
On being asked if the U.S. government
upholds freedom of speech and of the press

“In defense matters, the trade off between secrecy and accountability is never simple; western countries do not find it easy either. But in a democratic society, the media develop a nose for the difference between real and invented national security concerns. When security is being used to mask incompetence, a whistle is blown.”

The Economist magazine
26 August 2000
Commenting on Russia’s difficulties with a free press

The military “is largely out of step with modern American management applications.”

The armed services have a need to “lower total costs and lighten logistics. It must be made more efficient and all of its processes and procedures must be streamlined.”

The military needs “good leaders who know how to control costs.”

Secretary of Navy Gordon R. England
Excerpts from remarks made at the Current Strategy Forum
Naval War College
12 June 2001

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Amendment I to the Constitution of the United States

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First, I thank the faculty and staff of the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) at DAU, especially Professor Robert F. Burnes, Associate Director, School of Program Management, whose dry wit and wise counsel kept me on track; Mr. Greg Caruth, Director of the DAU Visual Arts and Press Department, who should write a book himself; Ms. Alberta Ladymon, a superb editor, always helpful and cheerful; and DSMC Professor Paul McMahon, who preceded me in framing this project and proved to know more about acquisition than the grand acquirer himself. Then in rapid order, thanks is due for the immense help rendered by Jennifer Monroe, reference librarian at Patrick Air Force Base; to Colonel Joe Gordon, ever the Marine and current Deputy Director of External Affairs at Kennedy Space Center; to the Library of Congress; the Naval War College Library; the National Defense University. Special thanks go to many old colleagues from the media wars — especially George Wilson of *The National Journal*, former long-time Pentagon correspondent of *The Washington Post*; Tom DeFrank, Washington Bureau Chief of *The New York Daily News*; and Barry Zorthian, my old Voice of America (VOA) and Vietnam skipper, who remains today the master media manipulator (who has forgotten more about this business than I'll ever know). A special thanks to my own "happy warrior," J. Joseph Fisher who brooked no nonsense from me.

The initial catalyst for the guide came from a superior and exhaustive research study on the news media industry, written in 1999 at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) by a team of 14 students organized by DSMC Professor Paul McMahon under the leadership of Dr. James T. Currie, ICAF.

The excellence of this study is reflected in its first-class working bibliography, and its many useful media interviews with press and corporate personalities here and in Europe. The case presented a strong argument for this follow-on guide to explain to non-media professionals, particularly in the acquisition business, the need for an increased working knowledge of modern mass communications and media operations.

Because of the ICAF study's bottom line in understanding of the military-media equation, the objectives of that study are quoted at length: the news media inform, challenge, question, and aggravate. They affect the way the public looks at domestic and foreign policy. And they shape both its view of the world and its national will to address the problems of the world. The media are part of the national security structure of this country without being part of the government. This ICAF industry study reviewed how the media decided what stories would be put forward for public consumption; examined the business side of the news media, including how business decisions affected the military; and explained the effects of the media on national will and the national security decision making process. This industry study also examined the impact of technology on both production and distribution of the news and on the structure of the news media industry. It examined information warfare and the news media, specifically the manipulation of images and voices in such a manner that the

product would have all the earmarks of legitimacy. Finally, a comparative analysis of the news media in two foreign countries was undertaken, concentrating on the role that news media play in democratic societies.

For the longer term, this study should set in place the foundation for a center of excellence in military-media interaction, providing a forum for academic, governmental and military discussions on issues of common interest.

To Patricia Ann who will always be “Sister.”

FOREWORD

This guide grows out of a decade's experiences lecturing at the Defense Systems Management College (DSMC) on the broad subject of media, mass communications and national decision making.

The DSMC student body consists of professional military officers and civilians, acquisition workforce members, Department of Defense (DoD) program managers, and corporate representatives. It became evident early in my experience that the participants were generally anti-media. They were largely uninformed as to how press, radio and television actually operated, and how the new emerging information technologies were changing the very concept and techniques of communication. They had little knowledge of how government and media interface in the real world.

Today's news environment expects instant media coverage throughout the world. The military, with its sizable annual budget, its world-girding responsibilities and its tendency to draw media attention (often critical of DoD actions and missions) is a global constant. Forgotten in this mix are the less well-known functions of massive and expensive acquisitions covering procurement, logistics, technology projects and program management responsibilities. Without sound acquisition policies and efficient procurement techniques, the military can flounder unnecessarily. Anything less than hard-earned competence can bring immediate critical media attention, involving the instant 24-hour news cycle that is but an e-mail or digital phone call away.

There is no respite from this time-driven reality, and that is the problem. Institutional bureaucracies like the government and the military are likely to be structured as a rigid, formalistic, slow-to-change model with a hierarchy vertically arranged. Today's

rapid-fire dissemination of news, information and the results of public policy decision making resembles the horizontal model of diffused media responsibility with its psychology of "get the story, get it out, and let the chips fall where they may." This is hardly the attitude that a complex military organization wishes to accept on a regular basis.

While this is certainly not the way the military proceeds, it is the way information circulates today. There is rarely any mercy shown by the media to those organizations that fail to grasp the impact and the influence of fast-changing mass communications techniques and technologies, as evidenced by the dramatic reorganization of Cable News Network (CNN) after 25 successful years.

This informational guide provides background on the historical development of the media in American society, on the techniques used, and the manner used to deal with the media. Additionally, it assesses the politics of media involvement. This guide also briefly reviews how communications are used in war and in peace, and how new communications technologies are changing the face of war. Today's decision makers, especially those involved in national security, must be alert to the implications of media coverage on defense decision making, issues and programs, such as those that the defense systems acquisition community provides every day.

As to the future, it is now well understood that there is an information revolution underway, bringing vast and basic changes to the way we live, fight, work, communicate, gather and spread news, vote, pay taxes, and exist in society.

Global information systems are the equal of the 19th Century industrial revolution, and will also change the world. This revolution is about knowledge in its many diverse forms and ultimately about globalization of information.

This guide is but a beginning to acquaint defense systems acquisition decision makers with the highly

sensitive area of today's mass media communications complete with its intriguing "whys" and "wherefores."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide provides the non-journalist with a basic introduction to the history, techniques, technologies and functions of the mass media in America. It is especially oriented to the U.S. military and particularly to the officers and professionals of the acquisition workforce who deal daily with the media as part of their responsibilities.

Specifically, the guide is grouped around four themes:

1. The history of media/mass communications development in the United States.
2. The relationship of the media to the overall U.S. political process, especially relationships with the Department of Defense (DoD), the U.S. military and the defense systems acquisition community.
3. The impact of fast-changing communications technologies on American society, politics and media habits.
4. The current and future interplay between the media, its new technologies and national decision making in war and peace (most particularly with reference to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics) (OUSD (AT&L)).

Finally, this guide is a running commentary on how DoD and military public affairs offices can assist, advance and explain acquisition programs, goals and objectives.

You will gain a working knowledge of how the media operate both within and without the military's decision making and planning cycles in an age of instant communications; how they represent value added to the defense systems ac-

quisition community at large and to the program manager (PM) in particular. The ability to cope with the media is an increasingly valuable skill for anyone in the defense systems acquisition community. By and large, it is a learned experience. One must work at it.

The first reality is that the defense systems acquisition community does not operate in a vacuum. The media thirst for news (especially bad news) is close to insatiable, but the news is not always complete or accurate given the limitations on a reporter's knowledge base, experience or time.

To be blunt, the acquisition workforce is waiting "to be had" on any given day, and it is to any PM's advantage to have that value-added edge — to have been there and done that. In fact, it may be argued that in our emerging global communications environment, ignoring the media is no longer possible.

Consider the public relations issue surrounding the Marine Corps V-22 (Osprey) program. Not only has there been considerable media and political criticism of the V-22 program, but there have been unseemly intrusions into the privacy of families who lost Marine relatives to flight accidents.

Figure 1 illustrates the media's major points of entry into the typical defense systems acquisition process. It is a fairly inclusive procedure and can be triggered at any point in the process.

The media stand ready to cover any interesting situation for a very simple reason. As journalism professor William Serrin has commented, "A nasty, unreported truth about journalism is this: journalism is a business."

That being the case, modern public affairs is geared to handle such media situations. This strongly suggests

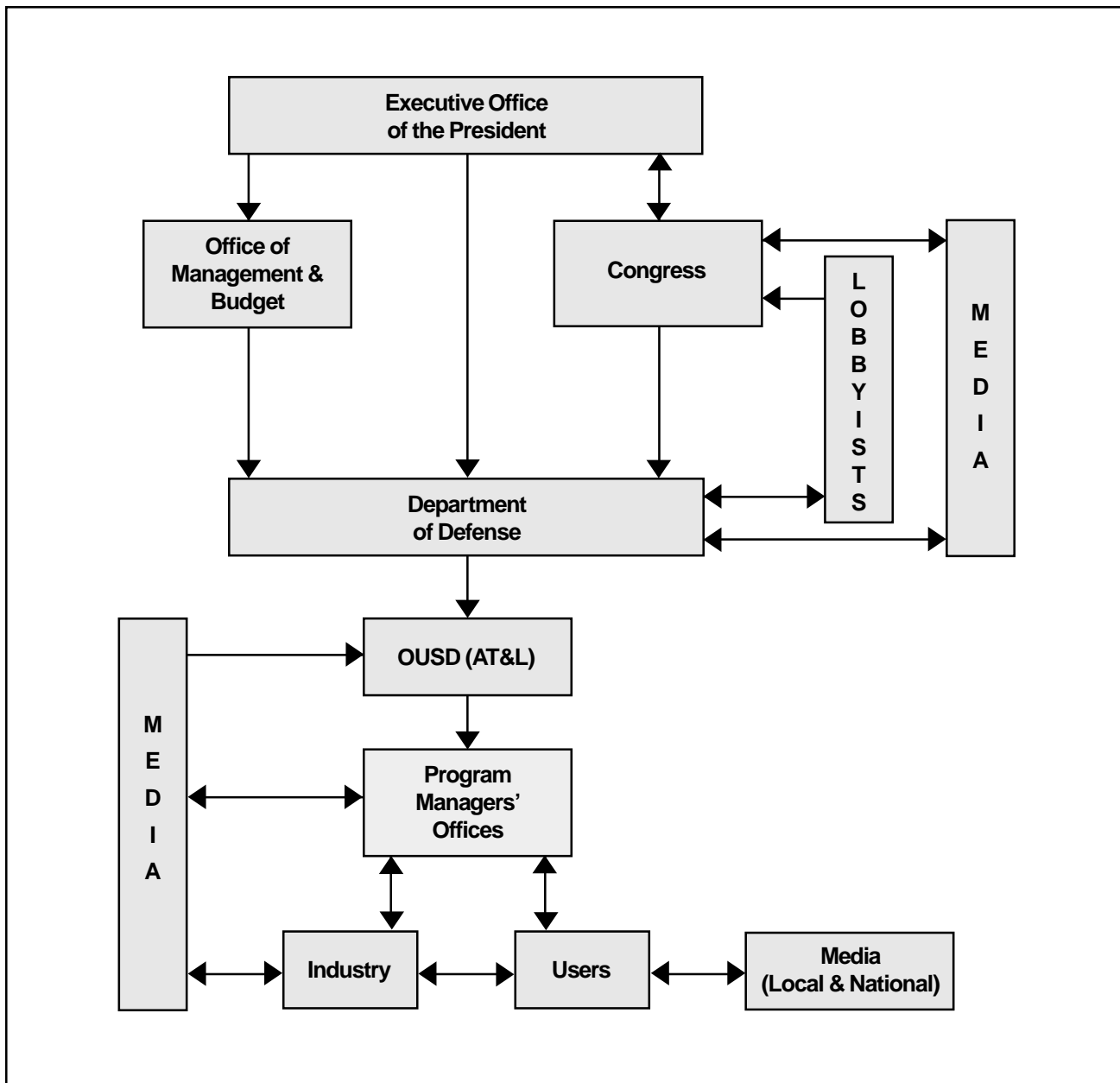


Figure 1. Media Entry Points into the Defense Acquisition Decision Making Process

that PMs follow several simple communications rules as they pursue their acquisition program goals. These rules are summarized in Figure 2 as a sort of PM's toolbox, ready for quick reference.

With media and mass communications to be found at every turn, it is incumbent on the defense systems acquisition community to be aware of the "how to" toolbox and to be aware of the information environment that today surrounds us all.

This awareness is a constant reminder that we should be alert to the media component of crisis management techniques generally practiced by industry and politics in addressing mass communications problems.

Experts generally consider six basic rules of engagement as reported in *The Wall Street Journal* (8 September 2000, p. B1).

- Be honest, accurate and timely in presenting stories.
- If you don't have all the necessary information, tell the media you don't know but you will try to get facts as soon as possible. Keep your promise.
- In dealing with the media, always be friendly, forthright, yet professional.
- Answer questions calmly, deliberately, and be candid. If you don't know the answer or can't answer because of sensitivity or classification, say so.
- Avoid saying "no comment" if at all possible. It tends to be counter-productive and misunderstood as though you might be avoiding something.
- Offer to assist a reporter if he or she appears to be bewildered by military organization or military jargon.
- When appearing before the media, remember that your dress, speech, and appearance represent your Service and your country.
- Never argue; never lose your temper; be cool.
- Be positive and aggressive in presenting your answers or your story.
- Smile.
- Always check with your public affairs officer and your chain of command before you speak, give an interview, or conduct a press conference.
- Know the background of why you are there; know something about the reporters present.
- Smile broadly.

Figure 2. A Program Manager's Media Toolbox

Do:

- Recognize that speed is crucial
- Place a priority on media interests
- Take a long-term view

Don't:

- Hide what you know

- Get tied down in details

- Forget that public perception is more important than reality

The time is long past when the media can be cavalierly ignored or put aside. They simply won't be shunted off. It's a very serious business; done properly, it can reflect favorably on the credibility and reputation of the entire defense systems acquisition community.

Robert F. Delaney, the author or editor of six books, has been Assistant Director of the United States Information Agency, Public Affairs Advisor for Esso (Latin America), President of Michael W. Moynihan Public Affairs, and today writes a weekly political column.

Chapter 1

Department of Defense Public Affairs Policy: *Setting the Stage*

- **An Overview**
- **Where the Acquisition Process and Public Affairs Meet**

1

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PUBLIC AFFAIRS POLICY: SETTING THE STAGE

An Overview

Very few aspects of life are immune to the effects of the Information Age that is now upon us. The defense systems acquisition process is no exception. Technology is altering the look of warfare and the materials needed to maintain superiority on the battlefield. Changes must follow in the way these materials are procured. With the turnover rate for technological advances getting shorter all the time, acquisition methods taking years from start to finish are no longer feasible if wars are to be effectively deterred or won.

The United States is no longer isolated from its potential enemies by water or long distances. The Department of Defense (DoD) must consider different means of homeland defense, especially from such threats as ballistic and cruise missiles. With the Cold War over, the world is now multipolar, making it in many ways more threatening than decades of bipolar balance that was maintained and that managed to keep the world from total destruction. Countries that would have been perceived as inconsequential a short time ago have or are on their way to obtaining long-range missiles, possibly nuclear weapons and assuredly biochemical agents. Now referred to as “states of concern,” such states present a potential physical threat to our nation. Other means of attacking the United States include information warfare and biological or chemical warfare. Terrorism, formerly considered

an internal threat to be countered by the FBI, is now being followed just as closely by the DoD and the intelligence agencies. All of these developments reflect the changing threat against which preparations must constantly be made.

Part of this preparation is timeliness; it doesn't matter how good the countermeasure is if it isn't ready in time. Countermeasures may be good for facing a threat, but by the time they are ready to be deployed, the technology used for development may be obsolete and no longer effective. To maintain readiness, a major aspect of the current reforms in acquisition is the development of a broad industrial base made up of both industrial and military production. The military is not taking full advantage of the commercial developments in technology to strengthen defense systems. By drawing from more sources, defense systems acquisition can obtain what is needed faster than if only military providers are available.

As acquisition moves toward the purchase of new types of weapons systems for the changing battlefield, and uses new methods to go about procuring these items, relevant questions arise that merit answering. The public may well question the defense establishment, especially when so many tax dollars are involved. Why do we need a national missile defense? Why are Marines practicing urban warfare in my hometown? Why is the government so concerned with computer viruses?

A very special thanks to Cadet First Class Laurel C. Lee, U.S. Air Force Academy, now 2nd Lt. Laurel Lee, USAF, who largely authored Chapter 1 as part of a summer internship at the Defense Systems Management College.

Why is the DoD now involved in countering the threat of terrorism?

Dr. Jacques Gansler, former Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L), put it this way: “Currently, much of the information the public gets from the media regarding military acquisitions are stories of waste, fraud and abuse. A story based on any one of these vices is enough to get attention, because it presumably means that tax dollars have not been properly used. However, the underlying issue, beyond the tax dollars, is the issue of trust. If we can’t trust the government to use our money to buy gas masks that work, why should we trust them to make the right choices when it comes to weapons like the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF)?¹ Bad press on the smallest of issues can have far-reaching implications for the procurement of other items, gradually building up negative, often lasting perceptions in the public mind.

For these reasons, it is vital for PMs to have an understanding of the fundamentals of public affairs. The highest level of public affairs policy flows to the Services from the Pentagon and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD (PA)).

The OASD (PA) establishes policy for the flow of information from the military departments to the civilian community, to help with the analysis and explanation of defense strategy and national security issues. Releasing information can also serve to develop and maintain public trust. As with any organization, a sure-fire way to lose trust is by hiding or giving the appearance of hiding information.

In accordance with DoD directives, the OASD (PA) acts as the principal staff advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, for DoD information ready for public release, community relations, and information training (to name just a few). The office is responsible for ensuring the free flow of information in a timely manner to the media, the general public, and the Armed Forces,

following review of such information for conflict with national security policies. The OASD (PA) is also charged with serving as an official point of contact and the spokesperson for the release of DoD directives that carry out the Public Affairs Office (PAO) policies. The office may also approve or disapprove credentials for news gathering media representatives traveling in connection with coverage of DoD activities. The DoD is the approval authority for military participation in public events. The OASD (PA) oversees all joint public affairs operations, as well as joint training carried out primarily by the Defense Information School, currently located at Fort Meade, MD.

The OASD (PA) applies established “Principles of Information” when carrying out policy. These include making information fully and readily available, not allowing information to be classified simply because it might cause the government embarrassment, not disclosing any information that would threaten the safety of members of the Armed Forces, and preventing the use of any propaganda in DoD public affairs programs.² It is apparent that these principles hold the office to a high standard. At times, conflict may develop because trying to adhere to one principle may make adhering to another more difficult.

The PAO seeks to uphold its primary goal of getting out accurate, timely information. Achieving both speed and accuracy is often the biggest challenge for the office. When necessary, the PAO will err on the side of accuracy. In a 1999 *Time* magazine article written during the conflict in Kosovo, Romesh Ratnesar writes of the “maddeningly vague” military briefers who refused to make any estimates on damage inflicted in Yugoslavia. Journalists need a story — one with hard facts — such as a damage count; lacking such information often shelves a story. Generally, spokespeople are “maddeningly vague” for accuracy’s sake, which unfortunately may mean giving up timeliness, as was the case here. The Pentagon did finally release a report as to the number of tanks destroyed in the air war, only to have the press later claim in May

2000 that the numbers were greatly overstated, and the government had given out bad information to make the air war look more successful than it was. To an observer, it can look as if the military cannot win when dealing with the press.

In fact, the press had the correct information on the story. However, the spin that the press put on the information changed the fundamental message of the story. In this situation, fewer destroyed tanks were found on the ground by assessment teams than the Pentagon originally stated had been destroyed. The explanation given by the Pentagon was that Serbian troops had taken many of the damaged items with them for parts; other forms of intelligence could verify the original numbers quoted by the Pentagon. The press, however, emphasized and focused on the seemingly incorrect numbers. As editors like to observe, bad news is good news; people generally are not as interested in a dull story discussing the accuracy of the DoD in assessing battle damage. The press naturally caters to sensationalism.

This is one of the sticking points between the press and the military: the military makes an effort to put out accurate information, only to have the key message changed by story-hungry reporters. It sometimes becomes difficult to work with the press, getting them the information they want, for fear they will put their own spin on whatever is said.

The PAO makes an effort to avoid hiding bad news. The DoD tries to depict situations accurately, and then moves toward a solution of whatever problem DoD may be facing. However, the PAO does admit that occasionally, under certain circumstances, it is not proactive in dealing with the media. Proactive means taking less of a defensive stance, shaping the story instead of responding to the story. If DoD were to take an active role in discussing programs with the media from the start, before anything negative has the chance to surface, bumps along the road might be less shocking to journalists. In effect, by being more knowledgeable, journalists would be more capable of writing an accurate and informative story.

The OASD (PA) recognizes that the media are not the enemy; they are a professional entity committed to asserting their rights under the First Amendment, just as the DoD is committed to protecting the nation. They are also an entity that obviously is not going away, especially if the government goes on the defensive, let's say, by withholding information from public view for whatever reason. Ironically, PA considers its job to be very similar to that of journalists: to broadcast accurate information as quickly as possible. The major differences are in the rules of presentation and the dictates of responsibility.

The newest challenges that OASD (PA) faces as a result of the Information Age are the 24-hour news cycles (as opposed to the older morning and afternoon news cycles), requiring massive amounts of information. Today, the Internet roams freely around the world. These developments challenge the fundamentals of public affairs: accuracy and timeliness. The speed of information dissemination to the public is pushing journalists to get more news faster, thus they push DoD for fast information so they can make their deadlines. PAOs today must work to keep the information they provide as accurate as possible, but at a faster pace. Each delay in the answering of questions can potentially appear to be the government dodging the questions because, as many reporters suspect, the government has something to hide. Perception becomes reality for both press and public. In effect, the DoD is often pushed to respond more quickly than the facts at hand allow.

Developments in the way wars are fought also pose challenges to public affairs. In earlier conflicts, war correspondents under military jurisdiction were there with the troops, enduring the same hardships. Today, that presents a problem involving security, logistics and the ability of correspondents to set up their own communications by satellite.

The DoD has found that the Internet, while helping to disseminate information faster, also provides a channel for incorrect information to reach more

people faster. One example deals with the speculation over the Anthrax vaccine immunization program — at one time mandatory. DoD established its own web site for the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program, which includes “myths & facts” and a listing of positive articles on the topic.³

Today, PA faces the challenge of rapid change in substantive areas of defense such as the acquisition process. Just as incorrect information regarding Anthrax immunizations has the potential of reaching a wide and uninformed audience, speculation on defense acquisitions can do the same. Anyone with a computer can set up a web site relating every rumor they may have heard dealing with the weakness of a national missile defense system, with very little to worry about in terms of loss of reputation — as regular news sources might face — should the information prove inaccurate.

Where the Acquisition Process and Public Affairs Meet

Take any American taxpayer and ask what the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics) does and you will likely get one of two responses: “I dunno” or “They buy stuff.”

This seeming disconnect reveals an interesting point of view. A recent national poll on the status and prestige of our basic social structures places the military in the top spot.⁴ The American people like and appreciate their military (they are, after all, the sons and daughters of the nation), but the public knows relatively little about military organization or function. This reality establishes one reason why the public doesn’t know or doesn’t care about the details of military life and mission until there is an international emergency or a notorious scandal in the headlines. This is where the PAO comes in.

From a decision maker or PM point of view, and certainly that of the activist public affairs officer, this is not an acceptable attitude in today’s wrap-around 24-hour news cycle. Too much is at stake.

The OUSD (AT&L) sits astride a global organization that includes all Services: the industrial and technical research and development worlds: and contract, production, procurement, program management and, of course, the immensely complex and vital area of wartime logistics. Of the latter, Rear Admiral Henry Eccles, USN (Ret), a pioneer naval logistician, said, “Bad logistics can lose a war; good logistics can win one. Our history bears that out.”⁵

Few people outside the broader defense community realize that the OUSD (AT&L) is responsible for approximately one half of the annual defense budget — currently about \$296 billion — broken down roughly into \$40 billion for research and technology, \$60 billion for procurement, and \$80 billion for logistics.

Given the size of these dollar and manpower resources, and the general lack of public knowledge about any national security investment, it becomes important to tell the OUSD (AT&L) story. Full support, positive image and public understanding increasingly depend on a pro-active joint acquisition-public affairs effort.

This guide endeavors to explain the complicated rise of not only the media and communications world but that of the PAO community, with special reference to OUSD (AT&L) needs.

As for the world of PA, it has come a very long way since the early days of World War I when public information was the norm rather than the exception, as distinct from propaganda of any sort.

Today, it can be truthfully said that PAO is far closer to substantive core decision making and to the hard practicalities of making national security work politically and psychologically to provide the citizenry sufficient information to acquire a reasonable amount of knowledge.

Running a close second is the need to provide balance between competing charges and counter-charges regarding defense politics and national

security. Allied to this picture is the relatively recent media phenomenon where perception and image become reality. Television often morphs reality into a perception of reality that is misleading.

The PAO has in fact become a weapon parrying unfair criticism, rebutting false or misleading information and deflecting media attacks. The modern PAO has moved far beyond public information, although obviously it continues to pump out “meat and potatoes” hometowners, press releases, upbeat videos and press interviews of all sorts. Not to be forgotten are such positive publicity spectacles as the Blue Angels, a Marine Corps retreat, the Army Band on parade, even the highly sophisticated recruiting ads now viewing on TV. The influence of Hollywood is strong with such epics as Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan* or television’s long running favorite *JAG* — but it doesn’t end there.

Tomorrow’s emphasis requires a strong, positive image with story lines dealing with all aspects of defense, from the troops to the mission to the achievements to the problems in substantive areas (from acquisition to airborne).

Not all PAO specialists necessarily subscribe to a more aggressive, up-front, positive program. Resistance to change is a natural reaction in life; however, change is often the wave of the future.

Beyond that looms the increasing importance of the synergism behind the redefinition of the information spectrum. The line between public affairs, political propaganda, advocacy, advertising and public diplomacy is blurring, if not completely disappearing. This morphing of once-separate categories of information is not the result of a careful plan; rather, it is due to our wired world and its expanding technologies.

Globalization of news affects world opinion and public diplomacy. The immediacy of news and the increasing political fallout of real-time news are having enormous impact on foreign policy and

cultural norms worldwide. This broad phenomenon can be summed up in the jargon of the media trade as “informational TV and the Internet.” News formatting has changed. It is common today to hear “we interrupt our regular programming to bring you this breaking news....”

Using defense systems acquisition as a substantive case in point, the changes described above make it prudent and necessary to extend and increase public affairs coverage to areas such as acquisition, technology and logistics, among others. These concerns are as important to address as the more media-favored cases of waste, fraud and abuse.

A consensus already exists about such coverage. The OASD (PA) actively pursues a policy to “explain what the issue is, what you want done, and we’ll do it.”⁶

The OUSD (AT&L) fosters this practice regarding problems, issues and high-profile stories — explain facts and act proactively. The OUSD (AT&L) strongly approves the news value of aggressive public affairs since the media today have greater accessibility to information and facts than ever before. In addition, headlines in and of themselves can force the military into a defensive mode, which is to be avoided if at all possible. As a result, it makes sense to set the media stage early and to take the public lead.

Whenever the issue is one of alleged waste or abuse, such as “goldplating” or unnecessary “congressional pork,” the cognizant office must be on top of the situation with plausible, factual and reasonable explanations for the taxpayers and critics both.

One of the serious issues confronting PMs is how to maintain an effective business relationship with industry. Several important steps in the process mesh nicely with PAO policy:

1. The DoD’s approach evolves from such essentials as effective communication, better dispute

resolution and increased flexibility and strength so that all parties better support one another.

2. Do not forget that DoD customers and contractors are dependent on each other for value and success.
3. Realize that success is linked to meaningful interactions.
4. Eliminating adversarial attitudes requires understanding and a mechanism that will be effective. For example, the U.S. Army Materiel Command's (AMC) "Partnering for Success Program."

All of these steps apply equally to business and public affairs.⁷

J. Joseph Fisher said it best: "Remember: if the contractor fails, the government fails."⁸ And one might add "We're likely to have a public affairs problem."

Longstanding cultural and historical precedents also exist between the military and the media. This must be taken into account before the defense systems acquisition community and public affairs can meet the press on something resembling an even playing field.

There is, in fact, a gap between the military and civilian worlds. It is often seen, unfortunately, as an annoying and frustrating conflict of interests and values.

To address this problem in its widest context, a penetrating study was published in the late '90s called "The Project on the Gap Between the Military and Civilian Society," sponsored by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies. The authors, Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn, suggest that a "gap" exists because the military is "much more conservative than the civilian elite, but not more conservative than the general public." On other

cultural and social norms, "military society diverges both from the elite and the public,"⁹ fitting in somewhere in between.

This is the fundamental "gap." It is principally based on values, not press conflicts or ignorance — although with diminished civilian experience in or with the military, there is a measure of uninformed opinion. In other words, there is no automatic conflict involving OUSD (AT&L).

However, in the past half century, significant changes in American norms and values have been reflected in morals and habits, including a host of institutional relationships between the military and the media. These circumstances combine to affect the views of how the military look at the media, and vice versa.

It is at this point of contact that conflict can arise. For example, base commanders today find themselves beset by environmental concerns, activists, and various national social issues. It is here that direct contacts begin between reporters, with little or no military knowledge, and the various departments of DoD.¹⁰

Former OASD (PA) Kenneth Bacon seemed to address this issue when, in an 6 April 1999 press interview dealing with Serbia, he commented that "I think the thing the public deserves most is a set of conditions that allows its military, its men and women in uniform, to succeed at what they do, and as I said, we have different operations security restraints today than we used to have."¹¹

George Wilson, former military correspondent for the *Washington Post*, took another tack on this basic military-media disagreement, "Well," he said, "if the American public is to make a judgment as to whether it's [Serbia] a success or failure, whether we should be there, it seems to me there's no substitute for the facts."¹²

These sentiments pervade the military-media equation, and, if not careful, such positions can escalate emotionally, affecting the treatment of other military stories, including OUSD (AT&L) matters.

Reed Irvine, long a press critic, coined a disparaging phrase some years ago aimed at press agency news releases. He called the practice “mouthpiece journalism,”¹³ and, as George Wilson intimated, it is not appreciated no matter who or what originates it. All institutions should be aware of this lesson.

Both the media and the military continue to suffer from mutual ignorance and bias. Alex S. Jones, writing in *Brill's Content* about this situation, sums it up when he reported that “Journalists have less and less personal exposure to the military. That comes at a price to both professions, and to us as informed citizens.”¹⁴

Is a balance possible here that's useful to the acquisition workforce as well as PAO practitioners? The answer is yes.

In a remarkably candid and open-ended book, written in 1996 by Frank Aukofer, a journalist, and retired Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence, entitled *America's Team: The Odd Couple*, the issue is fully discussed. These authors believe that there is a new emphasis on the role of the news media in America, partly due to self-preservation, and partly an increased realization that the military must tell its story and must take its lumps when things go wrong.¹⁵

The “odd couple” suggest that understanding begins in journalism schools, and the press should create military news beats and give more attention to National Guard and Reserve units. The same holds for military contractors and military procurement.

The increased opportunities are certainly there, the initiative is there and the rule at hand is “Let the Games Begin.”

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Chapter 2

Historical Background of the Press and Media in the United States

- **The Emerging Information Society**
- **News and Media Concepts in a Democratic Society**
- **The Historical, Political and Cultural Roles of the Media**
- **The Media in the Political Process**
- **Opinion versus News**
- **The Rise of Adversarial Media-Government Relations**

2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PRESS AND MEDIA IN THE UNITED STATES

The Emerging Information Society

The phrase “communications revolution” is far too tame a phrase to describe what is happening in a world literally remaking itself, as humankind wires itself and teaches itself global communications.

It is fairly common today to see a five-year-old who can’t spell teaching a grandparent how to use a computer or a teenager doing term papers through research on the Internet.

Globally these are profound changes remaking societies, economies and nations. It is the most radical reshaping of information distribution ever attempted, and this reordering of communications is only the beginning. No one yet knows when and how it will stabilize. No one knows how these incredibly fast, high-tech, relatively low-cost innovations and equipment will restructure politics, journalism, military information, acquisition and transportation procedures, even war and peace.

In 2000, according to the *Computer Industry Almanac*, the United States had an estimated 133 million Internet users out of a population of 281 million people. Consider also that the residential and office telephone is rapidly giving way to mobile, miniaturized hand-held phone/computers (palm pilots), now capable of reaching around the world. And these are just two of the many new electronic developments rapidly changing everything around us. This is the type of change that would have devastated Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press, and civilization’s first modern

leap forward in communications and dissemination of the written word.

A. L. Griffin, writing in *Parade* magazine (29 November 1999, p. 18), reports that by 2006, analog TV will be a thing of the past. By 2003, all commercial and public TV will be broadcasting through digital television (DTV). *Newsweek* magazine (31 May 1999, p. 57) labels this technical advance as “the new digital galaxy.”

Societal institutions, such as the military and the corporation, have had little time to understand, employ and utilize these new technologies before a new generation of technology and equipment appears. Techniques are constantly honed to challenge users in an unending series of technical upgrades, reforming the world around us again and again.

News and Media Concepts in a Democratic Society

Democratic societies are rooted in free expression, citizen participation and the rule of law. This is easily said, but difficult to achieve. Central to such a complex political compromise is the unfettered flow of information, the acceptance of constructive criticism, and the existence of a free press to include radio, television, and now the panoply of computer, Internet, satellite and increasingly diverse broadband telecommunications.

The arrival on the scene of 24-hour news in real time has pressured the media into changing styles

and types of coverage by closely studying audience reactions. Unfortunately, sensationalism and “info-tainment” have become factors with which to contend. “Spinning of the News,” as the *Washington Post*’s Howard Kurtz tells us, has also become a way of journalistic life, leading to press cynicism that *New Yorker* magazine political writer, Joe Klein angrily defines as “the skepticism of the mediocre.”¹

A free press in a democratic society has a responsibility to its audiences to be honest, accurate and even-handed, even though the individual reporter may be biased one way or another. Columnists and commentators, on the other hand, are paid to freely express opinions and views that may represent a particular position or argument. The trick is to know the difference.

A free society depends on this approach. To violate it leads to a loss of credibility, misinformation and a deliberate effort to warp or influence the facts and the truth. Proper functioning of the news cycle depends on this concept of freedom. The United States Constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights, gives almost unlimited freedom and protection to the press, even if the matter under review results in irresponsible reporting. That too is protected.

In general, as Professor Michael Schudson has pointed out, a free press should meet the following criteria as news media: provide fair and full information, present explanations of complex issues, carry the news of various social groups, provide what people want, and act on behalf of the common interest. News media should hold government accountable and should provide understanding of issues and their audiences; news media should be a democratic forum for dialogue and decision making.² While one may argue with the dimension of these criteria, they represent by and large the modern parameters of a free press, applicable, of course, across the board to include radio, television, the Internet and print media.

With today’s rapidly changing communications, this parameter can be a tall order. For example, highly competitive cable news outlets (CNN, MSNBC and Fox, among others) fight constantly for market share, which demands an endless effort to grasp and hold audiences by being first with breaking news, being more dramatic or sensational in news presentation, or repeating a continuous recycling or upgrading of already disseminated news presented with the drum beat of “talking heads.” In my mind and that of many journalists, “talking heads” may be defined as self-described experts, often controversial, frequently bombastic, and not infrequently advocates of one side of whatever the controversy is about. The classic example of “talking heads” on such shows as Geraldo Rivera of CNBC and John Gibson, now of Fox, was coverage of the 1997-8 O.J. Simpson trial that polarized the country and brought cable news to a prominence not always merited.

On the other hand, modern communications, with its multiple entry points into general society, presents an irresistible target for elected politicians with their various platforms and agendas. As former New Hampshire Congressman William Zeffert put it in an interview: “What working politician worth his salt or his re-electability can resist the opportunity to get face time on national television and cable, every day if possible. And it’s free.”³

Long time *Boston Globe* columnist Martin Nolan has commented, “Television changed the seating arrangements of press and politics; cable television has made it a non-stop circus.”⁴ Today, web pages, digital photography and endless Internet coverage and discussion have become commonplace.

Modern television, with its ability to reach 70-90 million or more people at any one time, depending on fashion, fad or crisis (e.g., *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, *Survivor* or Lady Di’s funeral). Newt Minow, former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, long ago described the program side of television as “a wasteland.” Not much has changed in mainstream broadcast

television. The many specialized cable channels have taken advantage of this condition and are now catering to personal tastes with sports channels, a history and military channel, several news and business channels, a food channel and a court channel, among many others; totaling over 250 channels advertised by satellite TV in their current promotional material. This advance has come at a high price in viewership to the old on-line networks. The on-line networks have lost viewership to the specialty cable channels since the national audience pool is finite. At the same time, cable viewers, for example, are settling in to watch C-SPAN (government at work), the NASA channel (America in space), and A&E (arts and entertainment with biographies and documentaries).

It should never be forgotten that mass communications is a “for profit” industry. It is a fiercely competitive business, and profits, ratings and prominence flow from viewership, advertising revenues and sales. Ratings and advertising depend on how popular, timely, sensational, or controversial the media product is. The old news editor adage that “bad news is good news” is a bottom-line verity. This is especially valid in the rough-and-tumble world of competitive journalism. Political scandals attract audiences as do natural disasters, heinous crimes and celebrity misfortunes.

Increasingly, the format of media coverage and exploitation is changing dramatically as new techniques, new instrumentalities and technologies and new and different audiences appear and disappear. As we enter the Information Age and marvel at the new and different means of communicating, doing research and conducting business, we do well to recall the earlier roles of the media since the habits, attitudes, and prejudices of that era persist and color our approach to the high-tech methods of tomorrow. The wisest comment on these changes may well be Philip Elliott’s in his book *Media Culture and Society* when he remarked “...the shift in the location of power from the nation state to the international economic system is graphically illustrated by current developments in the mass media.

The intellectual toehold on power is crumbling under their feet.”⁵

The Historical, Political and Cultural Roles of the Media

Imbedded in every society, developed or otherwise, is the institution of the media. It is in a real sense the fourth branch⁶ of government, whether democratic or authoritarian, acting as gatekeepers or cheerleaders for the transmission of information, good or bad, true or false, factual or opinionated, to an often unwitting public.

In the United States, the media play a unique role in influencing opinion. For example, as early as the American Revolution, Thomas Paine wrote highly popular propaganda pamphlets widely distributed in the colonies supporting the patriots’ cause with great influence and patriotic fervor. Early journalism in the young republic was crude, mainly advertising and polemics, small sized and confined to the original states. It did, however, establish a reputation for cartoons and biting political satire. News coverage was usually late and based on secondary sources.

Early American journalism was beset by grave problems: illiteracy; lack of transmission facilities and primitive printing equipment; and the residual resentments stemming from the Revolution, when rebel and loyalist editors often clashed as cities and towns changed hands, with wartime censorship often the victor. From 1800 to 1861, journalism was primarily a function of limited resources, untrained journeymen reporters, and the nation’s westward movement.

However, America’s two wars of the period — the War of 1812 and the Mexican War of 1846 — did bring changes in both the mode of reporting (with correspondents in the field) and the speed of news transmission (the invention of the telegraph). It also provided two other developments: readership grew steadily as literacy increased and newspapers gradually became profitable.

The first attempt of a military field commander to arrest a journalist who refused to submit copy was General Andrew Jackson at New Orleans. The war had ended a month earlier and the case was dropped.⁷

The Media in the Political Process

By 1861, journalism had become a political force in the North, especially New York, over issues of slavery and the sanctity of the Union. The South was a different story since its press had nowhere near the coverage the North enjoyed. Southern journalism went downhill steadily throughout the war because of a lack of paper, destroyed equipment, and a shortage of personnel.

Northern newspapers and magazines with their combat artists and early photography by Matthew Brady greatly influenced politics and the war effort. Although correspondents were technically under military discipline⁸ regarding military security, newspapers were constantly filled with war news. It was not unheard of for general officers to cultivate favor with journalists to advance military careers or encourage post-war political careers. Nor was it unknown that some Union generals literally hated the press — General William Tecumseh Sherman, among them.

In fact, General Sherman once tried to court martial and hang a journalist for not submitting copy to Sherman before sending it to his paper. In general, the newsmen used the telegraph to speed transmission of news, and although censorship was in effect, it was regularly ignored. The war also gave rise to the creation of the Associated Press (AP), which led in turn to a nationally syndicated service.⁹ There were timeless lessons learned in the Civil War still applicable today. War brings out the inherent conflict between the military, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. It remains unresolved. The other lesson is the inevitability of the friction between the military and the media on matters of security and hard-nosed criticism of troops in the field

who did not appreciate the critical attention or the negativism.

As the 19th Century drew to a close, important changes in technology had strengthened and expanded American newspapers. The telephone had been invented, the telegraph spanned the nation, improved printing presses were available, national and Atlantic cable had been laid, news now moved fairly rapidly and millions of readers world wide were introduced to the daily newspaper and the monthly magazine. With these developments, competition became fierce and often spectacular leading to a period known as “yellow journalism,”¹⁰ a phrase meaning “anything goes.”

The first major national example of political sensationalism and newspaper “yellow journalism” literally brought on the Spanish-American War. Randolph Hearst, publisher of the *New York Journal* and an owner of a growing chain of newspapers, and Joseph Pulitzer, his *New York World* competitor, decided to encourage, if not force, President William McKinley’s Administration to help liberate Cuba from Spain and to punish Spain for its alleged colonial transgressions. The story is familiar: build popular enthusiasm for war, put pressure on the White House, threaten Congress with negative public opinion, seize upon inflammatory incidents with lurid headlines and demands for political action and, as in this case, war is eventually forced upon the politicians. The triggering incident, of course, was the sinking of the USS *Maine*.

This basic technique of fomenting a form of national hysteria and rage has been followed ever since. Today, while the techniques are much more sophisticated and clever, the results are the same: engage public opinion, arouse popular attention and involvement, develop constant pressure on the politicians, and force the issue. In Hearst’s time, the publishing cost was minimal; today, the costs run into millions and cover every known outlet from print to radio/TV to letter-writing campaigns, from

web pages to on-line chat rooms and telephone banks. Today, the American public is confronted by massive propaganda campaigns covering everything from elections to Congressional floor votes, with the people trying to separate fact from fiction. Not a happy situation in terms of solid public policy decision making or citizen involvement. We shall follow the modern development of the media and politics in the next chapter.

Opinion versus News

Unlike many European media outlets, America has always tolerated, accepted and sought both opinion and facts. Opinion is identified as editorials and commentaries. Hard news is based on the journalistic rubric: who, what, why, where and when. In this fashion, American media could clearly separate a factual, balanced story from the more controversial, often argumentative, editorial comment that espouses a particular point of view, good or bad. Certainly for the last 90 years, this has been the accepted norm.

This concept is now changing and not necessarily for the better. Hard factual news is no longer the universal base of journalism; the bottom line of profit and loss too often is. Increasingly, news stories and television public affairs bring you a mixture: the facts, interspersed with editorial asides, with biased wording frequently inserted into the text (notably the slanted use of adjectives, adverbs and pejorative words).

Ideally, in a democracy the essence of free and frank dialogue is in its openness. It is in this spirit that debate is conducted; eventually, public opinion, largely formed over time by the media, coalesces around a generally agreed-upon point. It is out of this give-and-take evolution of thought that public opinion is formulated and policy is argued — and eventually legislated or implemented.

Constructive criticism becomes the cornerstone of such a process. Democratic processes demand it.

Constructive criticism is not negative; it is hard-nosed and often painful. The problem arises when societal institutions (e.g., the legal profession, the press, the military, educational or governmental bureaucracies and political parties) react defensively and revert to negativism, evasion, or obfuscation. This is to no one's benefit but it seems to happen more and more. The stakes are perceived to be too high (lose an election, have a weapons system cut back or cut out) to do otherwise. Aggressive action to change opinion is the usual response, and this is delivered in a variety of forms and techniques. These may include slanted or oppositional news stories to rebut editorials — and increasingly through the use of surrogate television “talking heads.” These “talking head” experts try to make their case; for example, during President Clinton's impeachment, Lanny Davis, a Washington lawyer, was often invited by the networks to argue the President's case.

Such mixing and matching of public argument is not likely to win over a majority, but it will support the already committed. It does tend to build readership or viewership. This technique of challenging facts and shifting opinion has become big business. Witness again the 1998 drama of the Presidential impeachment. The accusations and the denials consumed the public airways, especially the radio and talk show and cable news channels and the inevitable weekend news-maker shows on the major networks, which often turn out to be Monday morning headlines. One feeds on the other.

These techniques have become commonplace. They are considered a normal part of media and political strategies frequently aimed at uninformed and uncommitted audiences. The great offense is in not separating the line between news and opinion as has been reflected in the recent surge in 24-hour real-time news bolstered with endless interviews and commentaries to back up opinions. It is often difficult for the occasional or uninformed viewer or reader to tell where news and facts differ from opinion or advocacy. The net result can be confusion and misinterpretation.

The Rise of Adversarial Media-Government Relations

World Wars I and II set the pattern for stable media-government relations. It was a simple equation: the media generally supported government and military goals. The reporters were patriotic, many served in or with the forces (Walter Lippman in WWI; Edward R. Murrow and Ernie Pyle, who died in combat, in WWII). There is a corridor in the Pentagon dedicated to war correspondents, where also is found the newsroom, the DoD briefing room and the OASD (PA). Service chiefs of information are found close to their respective chiefs of staff or chief of naval operations. It was not until the Vietnam conflict that the unspoken arrangement began to fray.

As Neil Sheehan pointed out in his massive study of the Vietnam War, *A Bright and Shining Lie*, the erosion was gradual but shattering. The reasons for this antagonism were complex and slow in building. They related to the nature of the war, the psychological and political restrictions placed on field operations by Washington, and the eroding American credibility reflected in such empty phrases as “the light at the end of the tunnel.” The effort to provide the American public with evidence of victory through such measures as the “daily body count,” not only proved incorrect, but eventually turned correspondents against the war.¹¹

Reporters who roamed South Vietnam were in a position to see for themselves and to measure their experiences, with the official version reported daily to the press at the infamous Saigon “Five O’clock Follies.”

There was no overall censorship of the newscopy or television coverage coming out of Vietnam. There were individual pleas to kill or hold specific stories, but United States’ military censorship is not national policy unless there is a Congressional declaration of war, and there never was one regarding Vietnam.

This reality eventually put American public affairs output in direct conflict with the vast majority of war correspondents who by 1968 saw the war being lost, not won, as insisted on by the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).

Anger, accusation and frustration gradually grew within the press corps, and the historic umbilical cord joining media and government was cut. To a degree, it remains so today: skepticism on the press side, residual anger on the military side.

Many reporters of the current generation approach government news coverage with cynicism and doubt. Many times reporters will automatically challenge a story right from the start. They feel the media have often been burned or misled, intentionally or not, by official spokesmen, public affairs specialists and military briefers who, in carrying out their orders, represent political or military agendas they may or may not accept themselves.

This is not a happy state, and there is little reason to expect change soon, although governmental directives, including those of DoD, specifically state that accuracy, timeliness and the facts govern output. It’s simply not in the nature of the political game. Bureaucracies, Max Weber told us a century ago, ultimately have survival as their basic goal.¹² As a result, a bureaucracy will usually do what it must to defend itself. In the world of news and information, this takes the form of everything from “spinning the news” to outright denial and leaks — a time-tested Washington technique of passing close-held or classified information to favored sources. When an issue is sensitive or sensational enough, deliberate misleading is not unheard of.

Reporters, for their part, work with these tactical methods day in and day out. They develop a tough skin so as not to be taken in or to end up a “shill” (a supporter) for a clever media ploy. In journalism, being a “shill” is not usually career enhancing for the newsperson involved, although some

journalists have done it. The existing condition of mutual distrust between media and government continues. It is not likely to change because the stakes have been upped by the nature of modern politics, which tries to put the best light on any policy, program or election. Given the constant need of the competitive telecommunications industry to generate profit, it is quite normal, if not natural, to seek out the bad or sensational news and to quickly give it an in-your-face twist and to get it out to as many people as possible, hoping to give it “legs”

that keep the story before the public for as long as the news cycle permits.

With these ground rules, it is small wonder that an adversarial relationship exists between the governors and the governed, and the end is not in sight. It is more likely that this relationship will change as technologies overtake and render obsolete the old ways of gathering, presenting, and disseminating news products.

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Chapter 3

The Rise of Mass Communications in America

- **The Development of Advertising, Public Relations and Public Affairs**
- **The Impact of the Mass Media on American Culture and Politics**
- **An Overview of the Communications Revolution — from Cable to Cyber Space**

3

THE RISE OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS IN AMERICA

The Development of Advertising, Public Relations and Public Affairs

The explosion of American business activity that followed the first World War was unique in that the United States had become an industrial giant in part due to the massive industrial buildup during World War I.

Post World War I America was now well established. With this recognition came many business refinements and exploitation of what America did best: sell and trade.

Onto this scene came a man who literally revolutionized the way corporations sold their products — Edward L. Bernays, Sigmund Freud's nephew. He was President Woodrow Wilson's press officer in Paris at the Versailles peace treaty negotiations. He also served during the war on George Creel's wartime civilian Committee on Public Information. America's first effort at wartime international propaganda used every conceivable media and ad technique. The operation was judged a success and provided a practice field for the post-war creation of the hugely successful public relations and advertising fields.¹ Bernays had a creative, perceptive mind, and he wisely sensed that those companies that cultivated a market and catered to consumer desires would be winners. Thus was born a truly American innovation — advertising. Bernays literally cornered the advertising and research market and quickly realized that public relations was a handmaiden of advertising as were consumer moods, habits, likes, and dislikes. As such, research

into audience psychology became an integral part of what later emerged as the public affairs field.² The World War I military accepted the importance of public information and propaganda (though the Army did little about it). Later in the 1930s, the military observed the rise of communism and nazism with its massive propaganda and psychological warfare operations. It was, however, wartime Britain, with its own aggressive propaganda machine, that brought the American military into the modern communications media wars.

The late '20s and '30s were a time of depression and unemployment. Radio, with its sports and soap operas, was uplifting, popular, and surprisingly profitable. The advertising dollar quickly found a natural home in the emerging radio medium. Radio advertising sold not only products; soap operas sold escape, fantasy, and comedy to an anxious and depressed nation. In a sense, advertisers turned radio into a national asset that slowly, almost as an afterthought, began to give hometown audiences local and national news, weather, and sports under the general heading of public affairs. "News Departments" in those depression days of the '30s were dead losses in the profit-and-loss column. The costs of news shows were carried by the prosperous "soaps." News was considered a civic obligation. This was the normal pattern up to the eve of World War II. As a result, there were few personalities: Graham McNamee on sports, Lowell Thomas on news and a Columbia Broadcasting Systems (CBS) producer and commentator named Fred Friendly, later CBS president of the news and public affairs division. Radio, however, had arrived

as a vehicle of information dissemination. The stage was now set for America's first electronic leap into mass communications and World War II.

Meanwhile, advertising and its more political counterpart, public relations, rapidly became lucrative growth industries. Public Affairs, less a governmental function in the '20s and '30s, slowly emerged as a form of civic education that responsible companies and media outlets offered to the general public. For example, The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and Texaco sponsored the popular Sunday radio performances of symphony and operatic music on the NBC radio network for many years, and continue to this day.

The Impact of Mass Media on American Culture and Politics

As rewarding as radio was as a means of escape from Depression Era America, it was national and international politics that eventually introduced the country to the full import of the mass media. Newspapers were still the dominant medium, with some 4,000 dailies. Newspaper editorials, to the egotistical satisfaction of their publishers, still provided the dominant influence on readers and politicians. By this time, powerful publishers like William Hearst, "Jock" Whitney and "Bertie" McCormack were the main counterweights to the succession of presidents from Warren Harding (a journalist himself) to Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Radio, with 1,000 stations, began to change national politics. It was President Franklin Roosevelt who first took serious political advantage of the new radio technology, forever changing politics, political campaigning, fundraising (such as it was then), and dissemination of public policy information.

Roosevelt was also the first president to make serious use of a press secretary, although Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Herbert Hoover had made stabs at cultivating the press.

Roosevelt, crippled by polio, had a unique problem with photographers. There were special rules as to how and when to photograph him, usually only after he was firmly seated or securely behind a podium. Thus did an early unnoticed attempt to control presidential media coverage evolve.

Radio, however, was a natural medium for Roosevelt. He didn't have to worry about photographers since he usually was seated. He had a marvelous voice that exuded confidence, and he had superior speechwriters. Not only did radio carry his voice nationwide with the same message thus nationalizing news of his programs, but the president was able to bypass angry partisan newspaper publishers and editorialists who were largely anti-Roosevelt. The president was able to humanize his programs, to speak directly into homes and to be heard by the many people who could not read.

This enabled the White House to speak directly to the voter with Roosevelt's famous "Fireside Chats" (of which there were thirty). Steve Early, the White House press secretary, fashioned the idea of a weekly press conference in the Oval Office where Roosevelt (who was unbeatable in small groups) could weave his stories while he served cocktails — (usually martinis, an FDR favorite) to the print journalists present. The combination of radio speeches and White House press conferences (of which there were over 800) was a brilliant tactic in using the media to remain in office.³

America was warming up not only to the usefulness and convenience of home delivery of newspapers, but to the immediacy of radio news, which as early as the late '30s was beginning to outscore newspapers by broadcasting news on a more or less regular schedule. Newspapers, obviously, could not compete in the long run; the slow decline of newspapers in the United States dates from this time. Today, there are approximately 1,500 daily newspapers.

Then came World War II and everything changed. News became paramount — news on the home front, news on the global war fronts, news as a

weapon in the form of public information. Propaganda or psychological warfare, as it was then called, was used as a morale factor on our side, and as a morale disintegrator on the other side. Although newspapers retained an important role in mass communications, radio had suddenly achieved adulthood. Hollywood also went to war with propaganda films, training films (Air Corps Captain Ronald Reagan made many such films), and celebrity morale appearances. Walt Disney's enterprise produced visual aids and even camouflage. Even censorship played a role both at home and on the war fronts. It was a massive national effort orchestrated by the Office of War Information, the Office of Strategic Services, the Library of Congress, and, of course, the individual Services and the theater military commands.

During these years, the Voice of America first began under contract to NBC. War correspondents and military combat correspondents, photographers and movie cameramen brought the war home to civilians and servicemen alike. The post-war generation of print, radio and television journalists was being spawned and brought to maturity. From Edward R. Murrow, who was knighted by Great Britain for his nightly reports from London, to Walter Cronkite, who was a wire service reporter, to Andy Rooney, who was a GI reporter for *Stars and Stripes*, the famous military newspaper for the troops, these were the men, among many others, who later created nightly television news for its audience of 70 million people.

By war's end, mass communications was an accepted and practical way for Americans to receive daily news and information. With the astounding post-war rise in television (its immediate popularity paralleling radio of an earlier era), the stage was set for significant, and traumatic change in how American society received and digested news, information, and entertainment.

Television literally changed American society. Not only was it acceptable for an alien outside force to enter into the sanctity of the American home and

family for the first time in history, but a powerful influence was unleashed affecting opinion, culture, politics and national security.

Television's influence was and is enormous. In the early years of the 1950s, it was little understood or appreciated. Young children for the first time were subjected to influences, values, and norms presented not by parents but by strangers. Parents now had stiff competition in establishing behavior, teaching values, and exposing children to the outside world before their time. This result, in the view of the writer, has largely identified the post-war television generations in terms of values and behavior, the prime example being Vietnam and its aftermath.

At a different level, parents underwent the same psychological ferment as their children. Radio was audio; television was visual — but not the “radio with pictures” concept that advertisers and Hollywood so naively thought in the beginning.

Public affairs programming took a leap forward when it was discovered that people wanted to see as well as hear the news, documentaries, and to follow sporting events. People began to stay home rather than go to the movies, for example. Initially, television viewing became something of a family experience. By 1960, a typical family of four viewed a collective 60 hours of television a week. It was a big, profitable business eventually reaching 70 million viewers per night. Given the huge home audiences and the rapid increase in the number of portable TV sets, it was not long before political parties and politicians realized the value of TV “face time.” “Tip” O'Neill, a former House Speaker, once remarked, “a picture was worth a thousand words, and thirty seconds on live television was priceless.”⁴

By 1960, television technology, programming and viewership had advanced to the point where TV anchors had become celebrities and TV news was steadily replacing newspapers as the major means of timely news dissemination. Newspapers slowly

adapted to the new reality of playing an alternate role to television's almost-real-time news coverage. Newspapers presented more in-depth coverage. More coverage of local events and redesigned editorial pages, commentaries, op-ed pieces and a balance of columnists representing varying political views became standard.

In 1960, the League of Woman Voters conceived the idea that television could provide a platform for a national civics lesson to rouse election-year voter interest. The league proposed a national political debate. The debaters were John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. The debate was held in Chicago, 20 September 1960.

Few people remember the subject of the debate (Quemoy and Matsu, offshore islands between Taiwan and mainland China). But everyone who viewed it vividly remembers the visual impact John Kennedy, a relatively unknown senator, made on audiences across the country when compared to the well-known Vice President Richard Nixon. For the first time in American political history, many people (regardless of issues) voted emotion, perception and image. Nixon was viewed as nervous, anxious, uncertain and physically unwell (he was).

Kennedy was perceived by many viewers who had never seen him before as handsome, poised and in command. The pivotal psychological point, however, was that on television Kennedy looked as though he had won; those who heard the debate on radio thought Nixon had won. Politics was never again the same.

Television became the standard medium for political campaigns. No longer would Trumanesque "whistle stop" trains be used except for nostalgia. Now the candidates, with their growing tactical staffs of handlers, would fly into an airport on a chartered campaign plane to give a basic campaign stump speech, often in a hanger or on the tarmac. The candidate would work the crowds with handshakes and greetings, let the photographers have a field day and give full rein to TV cameramen, local

media as well as national reporters. Then the candidate was off to another location, perhaps 1,000 or more miles away. The advantages were obvious, allowing a candidate in one day to see and be seen by thousands of people in person or on television's evening news shows. It was also cost-effective in money and time; money began to emerge as a major campaign need with the increasing cost of TV spots. TV coverage would be edited down to highlights and "sound bites" (short snippets of the core of the speech). Reporters would do voice-overs and package the story for perhaps a sixty-second spot on the evening news. This added to the gross numbers of people who would see or hear the candidate.

This technique has come to be known as "ID'ing" the candidate. People now knew what the candidate looked like, even if they didn't know or care what he said. Chris Matthews, a leading news talk show host, said in his book *Hardball*, "always leave the dance with the guy who brung you."⁵ Favorable identification is a politician's lifeblood.

By 2000, political television had completely altered political strategies and campaigns as well as political and governmental decision making and policy formation.

Candidates, indeed elected officials, now carry with them a retinue of support personnel from public opinion pollsters to political consultants to speechwriters and their own media spokespersons.

Campaigning is big business. It is estimated that the 2000 presidential primary and election campaigns in the small state of New Hampshire drew revenues up to \$250 million as the election cycle unfolded. Nothing is left to chance, but mistakes, miscues and misspoken remarks do happen, and they can be disastrous. For example, during the 2000 primary, presidential candidate John McCain was severely hurt politically by remarks he made about the Confederate battle flag. Elections can be won or lost on such occasions. Millions of viewers see or hear the mistake being made, rehearing it

endlessly on cable news channels and then reading about it in the morning paper or hearing it on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*.

By century's end American society was thoroughly immersed in the information revolution. America had become wired as was Europe, a growing part of Asia and parts of Latin America. From portable digital phones to direct television through satellite dishes to the Internet, the pace of life and the availability of information have increased enormously. People spend more time with television and the computer, yet in terms of human contact, they actually seem to be more isolated than ever. This is a problem yet to be addressed; the implications are serious.

The media, as a whole, have continued to function as the public's gateway to news and information and to perform their traditional oversight role of keeping the country's leadership honest and on course. Today, one must include as media the rapidly growing Internet as a source of legitimate news and comment. E-mail has also emerged as a medium of gossip, rumor and bad jokes. The next development, according to the Pew Research Center, is that Internet news is rapidly replacing television news as the preferred carrier. While newspapers have lost readership, they still hold firm in that 63 percent of adults daily read newspapers. In the aforementioned Pew study,⁶ one-third of adults now get their news via the Internet, and they believe this source more trustworthy than television.

In 1994, 74 percent of those TV viewers surveyed had watched a TV news broadcast within the past day. In 2000, the figure was down to 55 percent. Among those viewers 30 years old or younger, 46 percent go on-line weekly for news.

In other words, Internet users are rapidly opting for the Net, and when they do watch TV news, it is cable, especially CNN, CNBC, MSNBC and Fox. This is significant for future public affairs, media planning and programming. This does not mean that TV is dead and that newspapers are wounded.

It does mean that television and the other media are in a vast technological switch to the next generation of home communications.

It was unavoidable that politics and the media should also change under the pressures of the information revolution. In a wired society every event becomes a potential photo op, and every Congressional speech or committee hearing becomes a potential network sound bite. The nation has become a vast and diverse telecommunications network.

An Overview of the Communications Revolution, from Cable to Cyber Space

There is no precise way to measure the extraordinary manner in which the information/communications revolution has affected American society. We suspect, writing in the year 2001, that this is only the beginning of a profound global change.

As comfortable as this development may have been to viewers, cable and satellite TV had barely arrived into the homes of America when technology and innovation brought new ingenious inventions to the world. Computers, the Internet, the web site and home page, chat rooms, e-mail, on-line polls and surveys, with digitalization and miniaturization now standard, are designed to expand the world's ability to communicate, making obsolete earlier means of communication. Much of this rapid change is due to the simple act of wiring America with fiber optics.

Scarcely stopping to draw a breath, the software, cable, satellite, television and telephone industries sensed a great opportunity to expand the telecommunications spectrum and profit at the same time.⁷ By 2006, as noted earlier, analog TV sets will be a thing of the past (like the typewriter), replaced by digital television (DTV).

By May 2003, all commercial and public TV stations in the U.S. will be broadcasting DTV with its sharper and larger TV image. These developments

parallel changes in fiber optics, making it possible to communicate faster, at lower cost, with expanded higher quality service through cable modems affecting real-time video.⁸

The ability to deliver all types of data — from audio to film, still photographs to text on your TV, computer, telephone or your various hand-held digital assistants — has arrived, due largely to fiber optics.

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, George Melloan, a columnist, suggested that the Information Age, with its computers and Internet, had rearranged the very concept of “civil society.” Today, a series of institutional connections independent of government communicate, advocate, and lobby government to urge action or legislation. This is broadly described as a new civil society. It influences governments worldwide but operates from outside government via e-mail, Internet, web sites, chat rooms and databases. Users in Moscow and in New York can move news, rumors, and jokes, organizing themselves around issues quickly and with impact.

This sort of development seriously affects the way decisions are made and strategies (political, military or business) are formulated, whether the issue is acquisition or contracts or White House/DoD reaction to a crisis. Real-time multi-channel response mechanisms are now solidly in place to agree, disagree, challenge or criticize. This is an entirely new communications situation, and more and more people are playing the game in a manner not always favorable to an institution’s agenda.

For example, in 1983, the U.S. Navy decided it did not want the A-12 stealth bomber. By 1988, the Navy decided it wanted the A-12. By 1991, the plane was killed upon direct orders of the [then] Secretary of Defense. By 1994, litigation was in full swing contesting the \$3 billion already spent plus such penalties as interest and return of unused funds. Congressional hearings, leaks to the press, 3,500 pages of court documents and “the Pentagon

procurement from hell”⁹ had become an acquisition nightmare. With the media holding front-row seats, the episode eventually cost the careers of an Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition), the A-12 program manager, and two admirals.

As if negative publicity and imagery weren’t serious enough, a former Secretary of Defense, according to former Pentagon correspondent George Wilson, remarked that procurement rules “contribute to an overloaded system that is often paralyzed and ineffectual and at best cumbersome and complex.”¹⁰

Apart from the political, bureaucratic and cultural shortfalls reflected in the case, there was a conspicuous absence of aggressive, smart Pentagon and Navy public affairs involvement to get a message out. The lesson learned: don’t do that again.

Today, daily detailed news and information on web TV, or interviews on CNN’s Larry King with its prime time audience of millions, engender more audience interest in a cause than a newspaper editorial page. Also available are TV talk shows (found on MSNBC or Fox); the 24-hour cable news networks; satellite signals (servicing the new national radio stations that are coming on-line); and interactive television (such as AOL/TV). Wireless signals (wireless phones, pagers, Internet); miniaturized computers; and soon, portable, easily carried satellite dishes will completely transform future communication. It is predicted that wireless appliances for office and household services will shortly reach some 13 million subscribers. People already receive instant stock quotes and bank by computer. E-mail messages, reminders of things to do, messages from boss or spouse — all will be commonly available through “palm pilots.”

Innovations, such as those listed previously, are recasting the way we live and work. Humans will become walking communications centers. Databases can reach your pocket screen or your home web TV screen with information — such as how every registered voter in the country voted. Globally, Cold

War satellite images and maps produced by “Sovinform Sputnik,” a Russian corporation, are now available commercially, as are American satellite images. This development is of special concern to OUSD (AT&L) since modern warfare increasingly depends on communications. Such military adaptations need to be in the inventory as soon as commercial business produces them. The entire communications industry will take another significant step forward when the high-speed uses of global fiber optics, laser switches, and broad bands are in place.

Not only is national security a matter of concern to OUSD (AT&L), it needs to keep abreast of technical developments affecting the safeguarding of classified data, protection of electronic systems, communications, and privacy considerations.

To sum up, in 1999 the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a non-profit California organization, published a survey of the impact of new media on youth. A “media and wired generation” has emerged, increasingly attuned to the electronic eye and to the Internet. In a sample of 3,100 youths up to 18 years old, the average time spent daily using media (from TV to computer) was 5.5 hours.¹¹ This new generation (from which our Armed Forces will be recruited) is already wired, technically skilled and familiar with the basic information-highway tools that the military is using.

What does this mean for government-citizen relations? It suggests a host of problems for our democracy. Given the rate of electronic and technological change, and the depth and complexity of the many new relations developing in an unfolding information era, (e.g., terrorism via the Internet), we can expect all manner of legal and regulatory rules to be put in place. These actions will affect the governors and the governed. This changed

relation means an entirely different way of forming public policy, making decisions, informing the public, legislating (note the immense impact of C-SPAN coverage of Congress) and conducting the nation’s and world’s business, public and private. Over time, it suggests a fundamental change in American culture — good or bad is unknown. All this profoundly impacts military and government use of and response to news and information.

In a very perceptive essay appearing in *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Peter Cukor, a corporate pioneer in the Internet’s growth, outlines three points characteristic of the basic changes that the new communications technologies have brought to the old technologies:

1. Destruction of traditional competitive positioning strategies.
2. Destruction of traditional technological assumptions.
3. Destruction of traditional regulatory approaches.¹²

If you apply these changes to industry, as has been done to the military and the media, you see direct parallels in the changes now ongoing in acquisition reform, in military organization and in the reassessment of strategies. These are consistent with media changes in technology, formatting, programming, news content and delivery. Yesterday is history, today is when we make the changes, and tomorrow is where the wars will be fought.

These advances in communications technologies influence the military and national security apparatus constantly, if for no other reason than the nation and the world are listening.

ENDNOTES

1. Bernays, Edward L. *Biography of an Idea*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 1965, 849 pp. Read Chapter 11.
2. *Ibid.*, Chap 11. Bernays was a family friend of the author. He had an extraordinary mind that over dinner could generate more profitable ideas than most account managers do in a year. He died at 103 in the '90s.
3. Small, William J. *To Kill a Messenger; Television News and the Real World*. New York, Hastings House, 1970, 302 pp., p. 223.
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6. Pew Research Center, "Internet Sapping Broadcast News Audiences." 11 June 2000.
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Chapter 4

The Media and the Political Process: *The Historical Perspective*

- **Democracy's Interface: Media and Politics**
- **Polls and Lobbying as Forms of Political Communication**
- **The Media and Public Policy Management**

4

THE MEDIA AND THE POLITICAL PROCESS: THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Democracy's Interface: Media and Politics

It may seem a curiosity of history that in a democracy there is a natural link between the politics of a democratic society and the concept of a free, unfettered media.

More than 75 years ago, Vladimir Lenin, the first leader of the USSR, remarked, "Ideas are much more fatal things than guns — why should any man be allowed to buy a printing press and disseminate pernicious opinions calculated to embarrass the government?"¹

Considerably later, in 1985, former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger succinctly summed up the always touchy role of a free media in a functioning democracy. "The nature of the relationship between a free press and government in our society is constant competition, an additional check and balance within the democratic process. It is a healthy and historically sound situation."²

Philosophically, one cannot function for long without the other. In the American republican model, society is arranged through a series of inalienable rights as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, all regulated by the rule of law. In order for this to function as perfectly as possible in an imperfect universe, free media are absolutely critical.

Free media or the press, if you prefer the traditional term, act as the critic, the gatekeeper, the investigator, the commentator, and the disseminator of facts and events bearing on the civic order

and society's interactions. Since the work of Congress often involves controversy and criticism, public and private, it is normal that an adversarial relationship between politics and press be as common as cooperation often is. In the face of severe press criticism, Thomas Jefferson was once asked whom he would trust to carry out the goals of the republic: intellectuals, clergy, government, or the press. He immediately replied the press. In a complex society as ours, wired to global news in real time, this is not always a popular stance. In fact, it was former Vice President Spiro Agnew who, in confronting a critical and nagging press, is reputed to have asked in frustration: "Who the hell ever elected Walter Cronkite to anything?" This is often the response of elected officials facing criticism, valid or invalid, from a free press shooting for effect.

Throughout our history, a relationship between politics and press has existed. Politicians and the press need and will always need each other. It is often a rocky road. Press criticism became intense in the late 19th Century and continued throughout the 20th Century, aided unintentionally by evolving modern communications technologies. With each technical advance in telecommunications (from the microphone and amplification, the telephone and the typewriter to the mimeograph and wireless telegraphy), press-political relations changed, and the rules of engagement grew steadily more complex since the stakes had increased. Here you can include the "rules" for holding a press conference, giving on- or off-the-record interviews and information, floating trial balloons or speaking "not for attribution." It must never be forgotten

that in all these situations, the rule of unintended consequences is in constant play.

Woodrow Wilson first ran for the presidency in 1912. Amplification and the microphone had just become available. This technology allowed Wilson, a college professor with a weak voice, to be heard by large crowds. Wilson had learned to lecture in 45 minute “sound bites,” as academics are wont to do. Amplification helped Wilson considerably. President Wilson was an activist leader and, reversing a long existing presidential tradition (from the time of Jefferson who wrote magnificently but who stuttered), he reinstated the practice of delivering the State of the Union in person, using the occasion to build popular support for an active executive branch agenda, seizing the initiative from a Congress accustomed in many respects to having its own way. Amplification underwrote this effort. Press coverage and photography did the rest.

This advance did nothing to allow the press the kind of access to the White House there is today. When Wilson suffered a crippling stroke in his second term, Wilson’s wife, Edith (his de facto senior advisor), together with his ad hoc press spokesman, Colonel Edward M. House, initially kept the seriousness of the Wilson disability from the press and the people.³ This could not happen today either from a media point of view or from a legal point of view. Today, the matter of temporary disability and the role of the vice president are very much in the public mind and congressional focus, particularly after the Kennedy assassination and the attempt on Ronald Reagan’s life.

The arrival of the Age of Radio in the 1920s was a giant step forward in political campaigning and in the growth of news coverage from “print alone” to radio. It came about largely unnoticed and as an unintended consequence of technological innovation.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt was a brilliant manipulator of public sentiment who dominated the new-found political use of radio. The

Administration needed to keep in touch with its constituencies, it determined to do so by radio. This proved to be an immensely effective political tactic.⁴ The stage was now set for the first modern communicator’s presidency.

Radio at this time was coming of age as family-oriented pre-World War II fantasy filled with soap operas, kid shows, sports events and comedy. Radio news was relatively new and primitive, with five minutes of news six times a day. Compared to today’s 24 hour coverage, this was a very modest start.

The journalists who formed the nucleus of the press and the growing radio news market were still essentially pen-and-paper reporters, rather modestly paid. Radio newsmen represented a new category of talent — men (there were few radio women then) who could write and possessed appealing voices.

So it was on the eve of World War II. Abroad, however, something very different was happening; something that would completely change the future of communications, and political and media techniques. It was the rapid rise of radio propaganda and its dramatic impact on the war effort. In the United Kingdom, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) provided powerful support for the Allied cause. British reportage to the European continent was candid. Even the news “readers,” as the BBC refer to their on-air announcers, were subject to official political warfare policy; German- or Italian-speaking Englishmen, complete with foreign English accents, added verity to the newscasts as being truly British, not expatriate. The result was immediate and impacting. Axis listeners grew to believe BBC over their own propaganda machines in Germany and Italy.

American propaganda and war information came relatively late to international radio. The entry of America into wartime global communications was destined to revolutionize the post-war future of American media development.

After World War II, the American media rode a 35 year crest of growth and popularity. The reasons were not hard to find. America's post-war economic surge and the creation of many employment opportunities coupled with rising incomes were accompanied by a surge in housing starts, college-educated veterans, and the emergence of a vast new middle class.

A corresponding surge in radio and television ownership was accompanied by innovative techniques in news programming and public affairs coverage, together with the emergence of "star quality" anchormen/women and "beat" correspondents at home and abroad. At the same time, the number of daily and afternoon newspapers fell dramatically to about 1,500 in 1999.⁵ The number of regularly published magazines and journals of all types had reached the astonishing number of 18,605 by 1998, the last data available.⁶ Starting in 1995, there was the explosion of cyber publications, ranging from Michael Kingsley's [Microsoft's] on-line *Slate* magazine to Matthew Drudge, self-styled political gossipier with his own web site.

Implicit in this electronic growth permitting news coverage of the entire country, there was and is the growing relationship, not always congenial or intended, between the publicity-conscious political environment and the aggressive and competitive communications environment.

If one were to date this development, it no doubt started with the now famous radio/television debate between Vice President Richard M. Nixon and the Democratic challenger, Senator John F. Kennedy, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Using television expertly, Kennedy was followed everywhere by reporters who referred to themselves as "The Boys on the Bus." He emerged the winner in a very close race. The American political scene had a new master — television — followed at a distance by newspapers. Homes now had portable TV and radios. Car radios constantly reported news during commuting hours. It was, for example, the

car radio that gave National Public Radio (NPR) its popular start.

Today, quadrennial debates have become a normal, if complicated, part of any presidential election, and they are intended to increase voter participation in political campaigns. A by-product of the debates has been a preoccupation with a candidate's form, personality and ability not to make mistakes. Less attention is paid to issues and substance. Debates have become exercises in "gotcha" or as the media would have it, "Who won?" Presidential and other electoral races have become scorecards of "who won, who lost and why," as if touting a horserace. The media need an up-and-down box score; voters need answers to questions or solutions to problems of concern and timeliness to the nation.⁷

These technical advances coincided with the movement of the American middle class to the suburbs as American cities emptied out, and urban political machines tried to deal with rising problems of race, rights and welfare.

Political parties realized more than ever that they needed to develop their own sophisticated media operations. Parties also needed to establish relations, hopefully fruitful and productive, with the American "Fourth Branch of Government" — the media with all its foibles and biases. It was not an easy task.

Polls and Lobbying as Forms of Political Communication

As media and political analysts looked at the problem, it became obvious that American political thought was based substantially upon changing, often volatile, public opinion that was only periodically concerned with politics at all levels. Voter interest covered the spectrum from economics to social concerns to consumer desires. Opinions of people were evaluated and examined through polling techniques and survey research. Polling over the past 30 years has represented a growth industry,

an absolute must for politicians eager to know what their constituents were thinking or not thinking. Pollsters were happy to supply and evaluate the data. Today, it is a rare politician, political pundit or editorialist who doesn't scan the numerous published polls for insights into what the voter thinks or wants. Jay Bryant, a well-known pollster and political consultant, refers to it as "when the press meets politics."⁸

The more that polls are regarded by the public as political bellwether data dumps, the more serious analysts should regard the downside of polling. Polls are based on random sampling, which may or may not accurately represent the slice of the electorate they are attempting to measure at a specific moment in time. Every poll comes with a statistical margin of error (a measure of reliability) that can be very "iffy" at best. Polling must be regarded with care. Karlyn Bowman, a survey and poll specialist, has indicated that the American public is no longer eager to be polled.⁹ It is known that interviewees warp their answers to throw polls off. Many people simply refuse to answer at all, making much more difficult the task of drawing a valid sample, and assigning a realistic mathematical margin of error. There is much to be cautious about when assessing the news value and the political implications of polling as a communications technique and as an accurate reflection of situations, events and news.

By the same token, modern politics and modern communications have been joined at the hip by a political process operating at federal, state and grass roots levels. It is called innocently enough "lobbying," a much misunderstood word that dates from the practice of President Ulysses S. Grant in the 1870s walking from the White House to the famous Willard Hotel to enjoy an evening cigar while he sat in the hotel lobby. Favor seekers knew of this practice and they would approach him to "lobby" their favorite causes and legislative initiatives. The term stuck.

There is much more to modern lobbying than just seeking political favor. Lobbying is guaranteed by the Constitution's assurance of the citizen's right to address Congress with any grievance and "...to petition the Government for a redress of grievances," as set forth in Amendment 1 of the Constitution.

What has emerged, in fact, is a Fifth Branch of government following the executive, the legislative, judicial, and the non-elected Fourth Estate — the title of this guide. Modern political and communications techniques have, over time, fashioned the "Fifth Estate." Lobbying has become a major force in American political life. It is not only a big and profitable industry, it is a powerful and influential business. It applies to the White House, legislative branch, regulatory and service agencies, as well as the defense systems acquisition and contracting business. Summed up, this nation's political structures have undergone significant change with the presence of the Fourth and Fifth Estates.

Today, there are literally thousands of lobbyists, both registered and unregistered,¹⁰ and as many freelancers. Lobbying, behind government and tourism, is Washington's third largest business. An accurate headcount is not possible because anyone can play, not necessarily successfully, and certainly not necessarily formally registered.

The art of lobbying, using the technical tools of communications and organization, developed rapidly in the last quarter of the 20th Century. Lobbying became more sophisticated, more aggressive, more coercive, and more effective as it reached out across the land to tap into the vast resources of "grass roots" America. No issue, political agenda, legislative initiative, or social movement is immune — ranging from military weapons systems to confirmation of Supreme Court justices, from Medicare to federal entitlements, the tax code and to base closures. Today, it includes authorization of a new class of submarines or contractors vying for a piece of the national missile defense system.

Lobbying costs money — a great deal of money — for it usually seeks nothing less than harnessing and forming of public opinion or the agreement of a member of Congress in support of a particular or partisan issue. In a full-blown campaign, there is an advocacy side and an opposing side. The battle is waged not only across the media spectrum, from editorials to television commercials, but across the political front, from campaign contributions to trading of votes.

Over the years, there have been many cases of organized lobbying efforts regarding one defense system or another. Take the Army, for example. A short review of the weapons acquisition process that resulted in public controversy would include the Sgt. York gun, the Stinger shoulder-fired missile, the M-1 tank's gas turbine engine, the Redeye shoulder-fired missile and the Hawk and Ajax missiles.¹¹

All of these systems prompted controversy and criticism, with the media and Congress joining in the fray with partisan-interest groups providing informational grist for the mill. One example of these lobbying efforts to foster public and political support for acquisition of favored weapons is the argument over Marine Corps support for continued procurement of the Osprey V-22 aircraft. The highlight of one year's campaign was the landing of an Osprey on Capitol Hill at the base of the Capitol steps, to the delight of media-alerted TV reporters — to the utter confusion of the many tourists visiting the Capitol.

Washington is awash in high-powered lobbyists, law firms, and trade associations that cover agencies, departments, the White House, the Pentagon and most obviously the Congress. Today, advocacy groups claiming to represent the public are increasingly important and they spring up overnight, espousing everything from homeland defense to refusing China admission into the World Trade Organization (WTO). Lobbying such issues is a never-ending cycle of punch and counterpunch until

the issue is resolved, compromised, or pronounced legislatively “dead on arrival.”

In modern politics, everyone lobbies. Washington area telephone directories list over 3,000 registered trade groups and associations,¹³ including corporate lobbying offices; boutique lobbying firms, specializing in special types of lobbying; and major law firms with former lawyers who, as former officials, do not practice law but practice contacting their former colleagues. There are firms that do everything from writing legislation to writing speeches and editorials, from polling and survey-researching to influencing public opinion and framing elections. America has become a body politic under constant pressure, with serious implications for everyone concerned. As lobbying has grown in its ability to influence government and legislation, it has formed a working relationship with the media in terms of placing stories or opinion pieces while serving as sources of favorable information. The result is that the media once again serve as the ideal gatekeepers, pro or con, influencing decisions, legislation, and policy.

The Media and Public Policy Management

It is natural that the media should be involved, one way or another, in the lobbying and public policy processes. Not only does involvement increase the intermediary role of the media; but it sells papers, radio and television ad space; and it creates controversy that tends to lengthen the time a story can be stretched out. Newsmen refer to this as a “story with legs,” extending beyond the daily 24-hour news cycle.

Over time, the approaches to news coverage began to change as America increasingly turned to television. Lobbyists, political sources, and official spokespersons began to “spin”¹⁴ reporters. Reporters tried to look behind the façade. It wasn't enough to report the simple “who, what, why, when, and where” of traditional news gathering. Now the pressure was on journalists to look beyond the bare

facts, to look for cracks in the credibility of the sources involved, to treat with suspicion official daily offerings, to challenge spokespersons, and to dig for negative information. This affected the American defense establishment as well as the higher reaches of government, and it certainly affected public policy management and decision making. The Congress, ever protective of its roles to provide appropriated funds and conduct oversight of government's activity, saw the opportunity to intensify the use of media, especially television, focusing the limelight on themselves and the Congressional agenda. Television was permitted to cover Congress through C-SPAN. It spawned an entirely new set of Congressional publicity techniques to focus on the constant policy debates, ranging from live coverage of daily sessions to daily satellite spots for members speaking to district media outlets. It also created the bizarre practice of "Special Orders" where members in an empty chamber, after hours, tape speeches for possible district replay. The stage was now set for a dramatic role-reversal between government and media fostered by: accessibility of politicians to media outlets to tell their stories; and in part by the desire of politicians to control the news for their political advantage. Policy making, by century's end, has gone public with a vengeance. It was all part of a systematic effort to influence policy through managing the news.

The term "news management" was first coined in the 1960s by Arthur Krock, then a respected *New York Times* columnist, referring to what he considered to be a calculated effort to influence the flow of news. The fact that news and issues are managed should come as no surprise. This is the modern political way, and it is not confined to the White House. News, good or bad, is managed whether it is done by government, by corporations, or by politicians. It is in the very nature of modern political communications. Get your positive story out, give it "spin," arrange a good "photo op," and make available to TV an articulate "newsmaker." The idea is to beat skeptical critics to the punch. "Stay on message," James Carville, Bill Clinton's political con-

sultant said over and over during the 1992 campaign. Make the effort an all-media "full court press." Properly done, the opposition is cut off and out. The opponents' negative message is muted, denied, talked to death, and trumped. It doesn't always work this way as Watergate proved and as the Clinton impeachment effort disproved.

The original author of this hyped media technique was John Kennedy. Kennedy was a master of the spontaneous television performance. He was photogenic, witty, articulate and, seemingly, candid. The media loved him. His White House was television's first major political moment. Within this context, it is reasonably easy to manage the news and the popular Kennedy Administration did just that. The press was mesmerized by the aura of "Camelot," as reported in Teddy White's groundbreaking study, *The Making of a President*.¹⁵ It would not be until Ronald Reagan arrived that the nation (and world) would have another such media giant in the White House.

Save for the Iran-Contra scandal, the Reagan Administration handled public policy issues brilliantly. Their control of news, events, and head-of-state ceremonies was based on careful planning and staging. Reagan was the centerpiece and he played it perfectly. Policy management implies an articulated policy that policy makers and spokespersons thoroughly understand. For the government spokesperson, this is the best of all worlds. Frequently, however, it is possible that policies and their underlying issues are not in synch, and the media will quite naturally move in for the kill.

It is this last point that brings on the media: trying to manage a bad policy usually brings ultimate defeat. Bad management generally gives the media and the political opposition a free ride. Watching a harried presidential or Pentagon spokesperson trying to defend an obviously flawed or wrong policy is painful, and generally useless, and leaves in its wake bitterness and loss of credibility. Large bureaucracies are particularly prone to this vulnerability since, by nature, they are loath to admit

wrongdoing or mistakes. The goal of any bureaucracy is survival, and this point must never be lost in public affairs planning or in anticipating media responses to a sensitive event. For example, the Navy's experience in coping with the "Tailhook" public affairs disaster.

There is an object lesson here that should not be overlooked by defense systems acquisition professionals. Make certain the policy is solid and the program well managed. At all stages, be certain that you anticipate trouble and you are well prepared to handle an aggressive critical media.

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Chapter 5

The Military and the Media

- **Historical Review of Military-Media Relations**
- **Military Psychology and Media Psychology**
- **Military and Media Discontinuities**
- **Changing Wartime Concepts**
- **The Rise of Information and Cyber Warfare**

5

THE MILITARY AND THE MEDIA

Historical Review of Military-Media Relations

In an open democratic society, as was earlier noted, there is a natural adversarial relationship between the military and the media. A natural affinity exists between the military and the media that is based, however tenuously, on patriotism, individual reporters' Service experiences, loyalty of various sorts, and a mutual agreement that, despite press criticism, the nation will survive.

Journalists are paid to get stories however they can — legally or by hook or by crook. Normally, information is gathered from open sources and objectively reported, covering both sides of an issue. However, this is not always the case, especially where the military is involved and security is at stake. More times than not, that's where the headlines are. In a fascinating survey of the wartime history of journalism entitled *The First Casualty*,¹ author Phillip Knightley quickly established that having a newsman, war correspondent, or TV reporter/cameraman at the wrong place at the wrong time, with or without command permission, is a sure way to create a military-media confrontation. The reporter wants to get the story, an "exclusive" if possible, with little concern for fallout. The military holds the opposite viewpoint. Protect security, operations, and accuracy; and avoid negative publicity.

Classic cases demonstrating these confrontations abound, ranging from celebrated Civil War examples where Union generals tried to court-martial reporters for critical comments about their generalship,² to the earlier Crimean War (that involved France, Great Britain, Turkey, and Russia) where incompetence

brought close press scrutiny, and ended in the reform of the British officer corps, its recruitment and its education.³

By World War I,⁴ however, the media had a completely new press information situation. From the war's beginning, the British controlled the Atlantic cable, and all news and messages funneled through entry and exit gates at British communications stations in the U.K. and Bermuda — a distinct propaganda and intelligence advantage. The United States instituted wartime censorship and required war correspondents to file their reports through military censors. There were some 500 accredited writers and reporters, including Ernest Hemingway, and enlisted reporters who helped found the *Stars and Stripes*, a military newspaper still being published.⁵ A number of civilian reporters was drafted into the military and performed quite original work in the fields of intelligence, content analysis of enemy publications, and a range of propaganda activities (e.g., the great inter-war columnist, Walter Lippmann, who served as an Army captain, analyzing German newspapers). At home, a similar mobilization was undertaken to create and disseminate war information to the U.S. civilian population through the Committee on Public Information.⁶

In the United States, creation of a massive World War I information and propaganda machine educated a largely inexperienced American media.⁷ Much was learned from the British, whose concepts of propaganda (the U.K. maintained a large and highly effective propaganda operation throughout the United States) were hard-nosed and included the principles of political warfare and what

is now called “psyops.”⁸ This resulted in a post-war corps of talented, experienced and worldly wise newsmen and their colleagues in advertising and public relations. The lessons of World War I’s battle of words were noted, filed, and turned into post-war commercial communications techniques designed to reach American consumers. The military lessons were all but forgotten. The U.S. Army (1919-39) fell to less than 200,000 troops. Newspapers, however, flourished in the between-wars period. Some newspapers and radio networks even posted correspondents abroad. By 1939, radio (CBS, NBC) had advanced to the point where networks had their own men abroad — men like Edward R. Murrow, Eric Sevareid, Bill Shirer, Howard K. Smith, and Charles Collingwood (who later in life was a White House press secretary).

Advertising and public relations grew on a parallel track, producing (as mentioned in Chapter 3) such giants as Edward L. Bernays, Carl Byoir and Doris Fleischman.⁹

By 1941 and our entry into World War II, there was a strong cadre of highly talented media correspondents, producers, editors, artists, consumer research specialists and corporate media leaders, enough to catapult the nation into the first stage of the [then] unfolding Information Age. News and information went to war as propaganda and psychological warfare.

An Office of War Information was created under Elmer Davis, a CBS radio newsmen, and Robert Sherwood, a leading American dramatist. The Library of Congress developed a highly respected Office of Content Analysis and Research under the poet Archibald MacLeish and leading behavioral scientists, Harold Lasswell and Hans Speier. In the Army, General Dwight Eisenhower appointed C. D. Jackson, publisher of *Time-Life* magazines, as senior advisor in charge of policy and planning for psychological warfare (psywar) in the European Theater. An Army Brigadier General, Robert McClure, was in operational command of the psywar battalions.¹⁰ It is interesting to note that BG

McClure, in four years of war, was never promoted, attesting to the wartime Army’s lack of understanding of psywar operations. It continues to a degree today.¹¹

In the Navy’s Pacific Fleet, psychological warfare and public information went their separate ways. Two quite different types of talent were used. Rear Admiral Ellis M. Zacharias, a Japanese-speaking intelligence officer, aided by famed cultural anthropologist, Dr. Ruth Benedict, headed a very successful psychological radio campaign directed principally at the Japanese home islands. Elsewhere, special psywar programs were aimed at Nazi U-boat crews, increasing their sense of isolation, loneliness and fear. The program was so successful that German-speaking American naval officers, speaking directly to the crews by radio and to POWs in person, actually became pop stars because of their credibility. U-boat crew members would often write to them while replenishing or when in safe or neutral ports. Wartime America became very adept at influencing and impacting both domestic and international audiences. The GIs, for their part, had their own newspapers and their own heroes — from cartoonist Sgt. Bill Maudlin to G.I. Joe reporter, Ernie Pyle, who died in the Pacific alongside his beloved soldiers. There was nonetheless the occasional zinger Maudlin would aim at General George Patton, or Ernie Pyle would aim at the lack of suitable clothing or rations for front-line troops. This was a lesson not lost on future journalists, lobbyists, and political strategists.

By the early post World War II years, military PAs had settled into a familiar pattern. A specialized career path was established for PAOs. A professional level defense information school was created, and a doctrine of public affairs was developed meshing acceptable journalistic techniques with the required command channels and the necessary security requirements (See Chapter 1).

This was the normal bureaucratic progression for any large organization, and the Department of Defense certainly qualified. It was an era of general

military-media cooperation. The media were largely on board. It worked fairly well up to the late '60s and Vietnam.

History has a curious way of unfolding, and by 1950 the United States was deeply involved in a Cold War against international communism. In 1950, the Korean-United Nations (U.N.) police action was underway, a full-fledged Asian war for which the United States was ill prepared.

Since the war was a U.N. action involving many nations, media coverage and relations were delicate, especially given the hardball international communist propaganda barrage (the United States, for example, was accused of using poison gas) and the growing number of political critics of the war. The U.N. press operation combined both military and civilian PA operations, striving to please the many Allied masters on the ground as well as their political masters at home.

These circumstances did not make for agreeable military-media relations not to mention the irritant of a less-than-perfect censorship arrangement, unnecessary leaks, nationality problems and policy disagreements that scarred the joint information effort.

The war gave television its baptism of fire. It allowed the more perceptive correspondents to get a glimpse of future political warfare complete with media reactions. As the world knows, it was the decade-long Vietnam conflict that finally broke whatever practical alliance existed between the military and the media. At first, in the early 1960s, media relations were reasonably good. But as the war enlarged in 1965-66, there was growing doubt in journalists' minds that the war was going well, that U.S. information sources were believable, and that the war was a war that ultimately could not be won.¹² This impression was buttressed by civil disturbances at home complete with spreading political discontent. The war was not settled until 1975, and even today there remains a negative residue.

The rift was now complete. The media distrusted government at large and the military in particular. With the technical advances in television and satellites in the '70s and '80s, a completely new day in media equipment and innovation had arrived. Miniaturization, portability of satellite equipment, and real-time reportage brought issues and PA coverage to a new level of immediacy. It was no longer possible to correct mistakes and arbitrarily edit film or tape. What you saw was what you got, and these reports went out to millions of people in the United States and around the world. With these technical improvements and the computer's ability to scan photos, among many other things, it was the beginning of a new information era.

As a result, the military (as well as national administrations) faced a totally new challenge: do it right the first time or face televised challenges and embarrassing commentary and criticism. The government began to practice defensive PA regarding information dissemination. This placed pressure on government PAOs brought on by inquiring, often suspicious, reporters. This was not a situation designed for a full and fair exchange.

The long-term losers, of course, are credibility and the uninformed audiences at the end of the news "food chain." How are readers or viewers to strike a balance and reach a conclusion if the primary objective of both sides is to gain some sort of media advantage, perhaps through distorting or withholding the facts?

With the advent of hi-tech communications, cable and satellite news brought real-time coverage of events — particularly sensational events. This is not a situation the military enjoys. Whether it is an event like "Tailhook" in the Navy, sexual harassment in the Air Force or Army, or adulterous behavior in the Congress, this is tough stuff to handle in any circumstance, especially in the military. This special responsibility of military PA — to be careful, yet candid in its relations with the media — is being constantly tested. This is as true of the combat arms area as it is with other major military

areas — for example, logistics, contracting, procurement, the entire acquisition area. As more and more citizens, supporters and critics alike, find it easier to check on policies, information, data, contractual requirements — or even Requests for Proposals (RFPs) through Internet access, it is not rocket science to recognize that constant effort is necessary to develop and maintain strong pro-active relations with the media.

Thus does the matter now stand. The technology is everywhere available and, in fact, is becoming more intrusive and exploitative. There is no longer any place to hide. The time of the chain-link fence separating the military from the media is over.

Military Psychology and Media Psychology

It should surprise no one that there is a distinction to be made between military and media psychologies. The first difference is basic: the military is structured as a well-defined vertical chain of command with a highly disciplined and socialized officer corps to carry out the chain's orders. The essence and success of the military profession literally depend on this principle. Commands and decisions go up and down the chain from the President as Commander-in-Chief to the newest befuddled recruit. This is a war-fighting reality. In terms of media relations, the military tends to produce reactive PA; in other words, it takes time for the chain of command to react rather than proact. Time is not something the 24-hour news cycle can afford. This is the cause of considerable agitation. There is no easy way around it.

Collectively, the media, on the other hand, are a loosely knit, highly competitive, horizontally organized, profit-centered industry. Generally speaking, a reporter, whether television or print medium, has only to satisfy his or her editor or producer and his or her own conscience in order to stay employed. There is no commander-in-chief of journalism. The newspaper publisher and the network chief executive officer are rarely consulted on an editorial or coverage issue. However, it must be noted that the

media today are in a period of merger mania where once-proud networks (radio and television) have been merged, re-merged and eventually swallowed up by such corporate giants as General Electric, Disney and Time-Warner.¹³ There have been some undocumented reports that these new combinations (e.g., Time-Life and CNN) have posed a threat to news coverage and editorial judgment. One example is the now famous cancellation, attributed to apparent corporate pressure, of a CBS documentary critical of the cigarette industry. If true, this is not a positive development. It implies future problems for both the media and public that rely on news candor and disclosure. This is true especially with television present in over 98 percent of American homes, and with 560 million radios reaching 99 percent of American households.¹⁴

The second difference between the military and the media is in broad organizational structure. By definition, the military is an example of a classic bureaucracy.¹⁵ Conceived as an instrument to protect the common good of society, bureaucracies tend, over time, to develop their own agendas, norms and internal cultures.¹⁶ Today, for example, continuing arguments are being waged by individual military services over roles and missions, and particularly over financing new weapon systems, as well as gaining larger percentages of annual appropriations.

As New York University Professor William Serrin emphasizes in his book, *The Business of Journalism*, the media are a profit-and-loss operation. Their success depends on two things: the ability to increase and hold readers and viewers; and, the ability to increase revenues, which in turn depend on advertising rates and market share, meaning more people reading and listening. This reality drives everything. "Bad news is good news," they say in the industry, which means the search is always on to find the sensational story and the sin behind it. The military disdain this approach and believe strongly that responsibility trumps sensation. This is a natural reaction from an organization dedicated to service, that functions through a system of

advancement based on experience, merit and seniority. You will never find, for example, a regional sales manager of a tie company instructing his sales reps to go out and die for the sake of increased sales.

The third difference is in the nature and psychology of the personnel attracted to the two callings. The military person is essentially driven by service, duty, honor and glory. The military person considers his or her service a total commitment — a career home for self and family. Military society is a close-knit, honor-bound supportive culture. Money is not the main driver; recognition and respect are. Media personnel — and they are increasingly female in this fast moving, changing system — are quick studies, bright, articulate, usually proficient writers and speakers (good voice texture), given to observing and reporting history (but rarely themselves making history). The trade has no rigid entry requirements. There are no bar exams, no medical boards, no engineering certifications. You don't even have to be a journalism school graduate. The United States has 79 schools of undergraduate- and graduate-level journalism. These schools graduate some 246,000 persons a year for an industry (radio, TV, print) that has only 1.4 million professionals: working reporters, TV readers, anchors, correspondents, commentators, editors, production and technical professionals.¹⁷ This makes for a very competitive career ladder. "Three strikes and you are out" would be a fair approximation of how the system works since there are many journalists waiting in the on-deck circle.

Another psychological difference between military and media is the media's controversial tendency to bestow star quality or celebrity status on certain well-known journalists. Current examples would range from anchors Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw to Cokie Roberts and the highly respected Walter Cronkite. Their influence on national attitudes is enormous, though they are reporters, not elected officials.¹⁸

This trend is at its peak. Fame and fortune come to those self-selected few who often appear to know everything about everything, given the areas of knowledge and politics they are called upon to cover. In fact, the controversy over the so-called "celeb" haves and the "work-a-day" have-nots publicly boiled over several years ago when newly appointed editor of *US News and World Report*, James Fallows, and Steve Roberts, long-time Washington commentator, parted company at the magazine allegedly because Roberts was on the lucrative celeb circuit well beyond the scope of his daytime job. This became something of a cause célèbre "inside the beltway."¹⁹

Finally, media people are notoriously thin-skinned. They generally resent being criticized for failings they themselves criticize in others (public officials mainly). Also controversial is the tendency for elected or appointed officials (Tim Russert, NBC or Bill Kristol, *The Standard*) to leave office and move immediately into highly desirable commentator or editorial positions.

The military basically has no such system of exploitation. It can happen in a few instances, with retired flag/general officers serving as military advisors to TV networks. The military system does not reward "showboaters" or active-duty celebrities. The military functions as a team, and breaking that code is looked upon with disfavor.

Military and Media Discontinuities

The combination of a military chain of command and the media's tendency to freewheel does not bode well for an early resolution of the suspicions and distrust the two institutions seem to share. This, of course, means a sort of continuing stalemate since there are constant daily contacts between the military and the media. There is no immediate solution in sight given the basic discontinuities. The military wish to shield their organizations from political and national security embarrassment. They strive to contain negative revelations while the

media fight to expose everything, especially if it results in a sensational “running” story.

In another area, the military confront a media cadre less and less knowledgeable about the military Services, since fewer and fewer journalists have ever served in the military or covered the military. There is a growing gap, with a lack of appreciation and absence of camaraderie (“we also served”).

For the military, one possibility of curbing discontinuities might be to reach out to the media and afford them opportunities to do internships, actually serving for a time in specified units. This approach might help bridge the gap. Something is needed beyond the annual military-media conferences, held at Service War Colleges.

The DoD might arrange special, topical seminars and programs designed to bring the two sides together in an attempt to better understand each other’s psychology and goals. Correspondents might also be regularly invited to take part in official war games carried out by DoD to strengthen a journalist’s appreciation of strategy, tactics and operations.

There is also the often forgotten difference between a quasi-liberal media and a generally conservative military. Values are different, norms are quite unlike, and attitudes about seminal issues — such as social problems, war and peace, and even how the news should be covered — are at times far apart.

Some years ago at a military-media conference at the Naval War College in Newport, RI, a Marine colonel asked a *New York Times* reporter who had covered the story of the “Pentagon Papers,” a classified DoD version of the Vietnam War, “How does it feel to disclose classified material?” The reporter, a Vietnam War correspondent, broke into a wide smile and replied, “Colonel, that’s the press’s job.”²⁰ With differences and feelings as wide and deep as that reflected in the anecdote, there is much to be done to fill in the gap of resentment and disbelief, although it is far better today than in 1975. The

residual Vietnam resentment toward the media by the military is real. The military still feel that the media were irresponsible in a time of war, especially felt by those who served there. Time in this case cannot be said to be the great healer.

Nonetheless, today the military and the media face an entirely different situation; warfare has changed, communications technology has dramatically changed, and acquisition and procurement are in a quite different reform mode. It is now more difficult than ever to control or censor the media because of the amazing communication technologies reporters have available to them. This allows real-time access to their networks, the Internet and newspapers. In one sense, as reflected by CNN during the Gulf War and the coverage of NATO action in the former Yugoslavia, reporters sent out news and information, live and in living color, before military communications and processed intelligence had passed securely through the command structure. Correspondents in the field can also “backchannel” information to their editors who can immediately ask Washington “What’s going on?” before Washington receives the information through secure channels.

It isn’t always apparent that the techniques used in public information or public affairs are largely the same as those involved in political warfare. Confusing the two can sometimes be dangerous and counter-productive. The difficulty arises historically from the classic American uncertainty as to where public information ends and political warfare (a command function) begins. Both use the same techniques drawing from the same information, but the definition of “political warfare” as taken from Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Publication 1-02 is “aggressive use of political means to achieve national objectives.”²¹

Organizationally, political warfare is conducted by several major elements: Army psychological operations specialists function as lead military agent. Civilian agencies such as the State Department, including the tasks of the defunct U.S. Information

Agency, the Voice of America, the Central Intelligence Agency, and, of course, the political-military planners associated with the White House and the National Security Council, are also involved. Political warfare is principally, but certainly not always, a crisis management and wartime tool.

Political warfare is aimed at the opposition's morale and encourages its disintegration. It also seeks to confuse, threaten, and misinform the opposition regarding U.S. policies, plans and tactics. Disinformation is a technique to make the opposition look bad publicly. Disinformation is designed to make an enemy believe what isn't and disbelieve what is.

Political warfare, in its modern incarnation, is often tied to long-distance sparring between nations using techniques of global satellite television communications. For example, during the Gulf War, CNN correspondents in their news coverage reported messages from senior U.S. officials to senior Iraqi officials, and vice versa. Indeed, the Gulf War offered an excellent example of the Pentagon using public information briefings to put pressure on the Iraqis, boost Allied morale, and warn hostile Middle East nations to be careful.

A third example of political warfare, reported by the media, was the May 1999 release of information that the United States and Israel had jointly developed and successfully tested a new laser weapon capable of destroying missiles. This news was released just as Iraq and Iran were becoming restive and Russia was threatening to cause difficulties over national missile defenses and possible Russian rearmament.

Finally, a civilian form of quasi-political warfare has emerged in the United States since the 1960s. It relates directly to modern American political campaigns and elections. For example, James Carville, a senior political advisor to President Clinton, often described politics as "war" and developed campaign tactics to that end, including the perpetual campaign and the invention of a "war

room" instantly ready to rebut negative publicity or news.

Election campaigning in the modern mode is in the author's view a nationwide dose of political warfare. Negative advertising, based upon what is called "opposition research," seeks to portray opposition candidates in the worst possible light. Attribution in the ads sometimes cites as the source political parties or political candidates, but usually attribution is laid off on some vague-sounding, public-spirited group or committee no one has ever heard of. This tactic is designed to mislead and confuse the viewer as to the true source of the ad. It is today a common election tactic. In the 2000 political campaign, it cost parties and candidates \$1.3 billion to conduct and pay for such media operations.²²

Changing Wartime Concepts

As far back as 1985, a special allied working group (Australia, Britain, Canada, United States) prepared a paper on "Media Terms of Reference"²³ with working directives for standard use in the field. Although this first effort is badly dated today, it was a wise step to take. The principle it supported was that basic communications, especially in wartime, should speak with one policy voice.

This unity of effort is becoming increasingly difficult to accomplish due to the complex nature of modern warfare and politics, national and international. The usual semantic distinctions as to when public information becomes propaganda or when psychological operations become disinformation still exist, as we saw earlier, but they are blurring. We are presently in a period of transition, and redefinition is now necessary because of the new forms of warfare.

As modern warfare changes, its new configuration moves inexorably into the Information Age. New techniques and weaponry are emerging. There is still an emphasis on mobility, maneuver, new and upgraded weapons, and surprise. This is reflected

in the 1997 DoD *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR). Integral to communications changes, there is a heavy reliance on deliverable real-time data and information so as better to control and manage the battlefield. This is the area brought about by the computer, satellite arrays and advanced electronics — the area known as command, control, communications, intelligence and information warfare. Its primary focus is to assure superior battlefield management, real-time processed intelligence and use of information warfare techniques. This effort hampers the enemy by penetrating or destroying its computer and satellite systems. These techniques aim at weakening and confusing civilian morale. They destroy a society's will to resist. The instruments used are propaganda, information, and disinformation.

These tactics have a long history dating from the relatively primitive methods of World War I,²⁴ to the more sophisticated efforts in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. The lead agency for psychological operations is the U.S. Army. It trains and maintains cadres of specialists in both the media and behavioral areas. These efforts are for the most part tactical and battlefield- or occupation-oriented. Today, one would also include general peace keeping operations.

Civilian authorities and privately sponsored groups also have responsibilities in wartime, especially in radio and in media relations. An outgrowth of World War II, short-wave radio plays an influential role in international broadcasting of straight news, commentary, interviews, and editorials. The fifty-two language services of the State Department's Voice of America broadcast the American story around the clock.²⁵

Under the overall policy control of the presidentially-appointed Board for International Broadcasting, there is the generally hard line propaganda-oriented Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe, a politically sensitive holdover from the Cold War,²⁶ located in Prague. There is also Radio Marti, an anti-Castro outlet located in Miami, strongly

supported by the Cuban exile community. Radio Free Asia is also aimed at China, but it is generally weak in signal and influence.

Obviously, other nations follow suit. We are far from alone: Russia, the Chinese People's Republic, Germany, France, the U.K., Serbian radio in Belgrade and, interestingly, Vatican Radio. Having once served in the Voice of America, this writer has serious doubts about the short-wave effectiveness of today's international radio services. Medium-wave is easily available locally, and television is everywhere.

Entire textbooks have been written covering the history and operations of wartime communications. Perhaps the two best and most interesting books written in the area of propaganda and psychological warfare/operations (Psyops) are Anthony Cave Brown's two-volume study of British and American World War II unconventional warfare, titled *Bodyguard of Lies*, and the U.S. Army's *Public Affairs: The Military and the Media in Vietnam*.²⁷

This form of warfare generally uses all the techniques of journalism, from interviewing and interrogating to dropping leaflets and pamphlets to radio and television and even using loudspeaker operations. The news media are, of course, interested in these operations, and this sometimes causes friction among reporters as to what is news and what is tactical.

In the Persian Gulf conflict, as reported earlier in this chapter, the U. S. military utilized media techniques galore from field briefings by top commanders to Pentagon briefings by JCS- and Secretary-level briefers. The military provided a steady stream of releasable information, providing news sources with more news than they could handle.

At the same time, Desert Storm introduced two new techniques for disseminating information. One was the news channel, CNN, broadcasting live from Baghdad, transmitting Iraqi responses and statements directly to the White House. This prompted

the President's chief of staff to observe that CNN in effect provided real-time intelligence directly to the Oval Office.²⁸

The second effort involved the first known use of cyber war in modern organized combat. Cyber war can mean many things. The simplest, most direct explanation is the disruption and destruction of enemy information and communications systems — everything from military signal operations to elimination of opposition radio and TV towers and stations. Witness the techniques emerging in our ongoing war on terrorism.

When you combine this new form of warfare with surprise, mobility, maneuvers, and weapons of mass destruction, you have a totally different, potentially devastating approach to warfare. The fight will be “come as you are, fight out of inventory, and where you are.” The implications are serious. In information warfare the media will continue to gather information in all its forms. But will they be able to in such a wartime situation? Will they be able to separate fact from fiction, information from misinformation and truth from propaganda? There is also the possibility that all electronic communications might be down. The media, right or wrong, would not appreciate being used to transmit propaganda or planted information. This has, however, sometimes happened. There is a larger question: will the media be able to function at all in this new type of warfare?

The Rise of Information and Cyber Warfare

Of much greater consequence to national security is the unexpectedly rapid rise of what has become known as information cyber warfare. It is a result of the Information Age and represents a military threat related to the computer, software, and the Internet. It involves, among other innovations, computer hackers and viruses. This new form of warfare is centered on the ability to disrupt information flow and to destroy computer programs, as well as to covertly obtain classified and unclassified information from these systems, often without the

knowledge of the target. Former Deputy Defense Secretary Dr. John Hamre, has bluntly declared, “We’re in the middle of a cyber war.”²⁹

The word “hacker” has entered the language of the cyber age. It refers to anyone with the computer expertise to crack and enter software programs in order to read, steal or destroy them. In the past few years, there has been a series of attacks on defense computer and security systems by “hackers” worldwide. They attempt to break into the systems, download information and put it on the Internet. In addition, the spreading of “viruses,” an intrusive technique wherein “hackers” invade a program with messages in such a manner as to spread worldwide a virus that destroys files and programs. “Hackers” can also enter files and release the data (often sensitive) to worldwide audiences or conversely destroy a system. This process can be devastating to a cyber age military from several points of view: breeches of security, intelligence gathering, data destruction and entry into tactical programming to read or to destroy.

From an information standpoint, the ability to post false or misleading facts, programs and stories, or to create misleading scenarios, will become standard techniques in future warfare. The use of the Internet as a tool of misinformation, rumor, and propaganda is already a recurring reality. Without reference to the military, all one need do is surf the web and enter a chat room and it becomes a conspiracy theorist's dream. It does not take imagination to recognize the military threat to good order and national morale.

The computer and the Internet are not going away. In fact, they give every indication of growing larger, expanding indefinitely, reaching more people, and incorporating emerging technologies. The new digital age makes more information immediately available from on-line acquisition data to just-in-time deliveries and from operational intelligence to battlefield computerization. This potential for danger and destruction underscores the continuing need to develop effective responses.

In the particularly revealing Joint Staff Report entitled *Joint Vision 2020*, issued in May 2000, reported by Bill Gertz of the *Washington Times*, the Pentagon revealed that soon the country will have the ability to attack foreign computers and software networks while resisting enemy assaults on our systems.

Gertz indicated that cyber war's goals are to dominate conflicts through "advanced communications and intelligence...[and] focused logistics support." In addition, Gertz reports, this form of information operations includes everything "from

physical destruction to psychological operations to computer network defense."³⁰

Gertz's analysis also points out that China's intent is to focus on information warfare, making it co-equal to the Army, Navy and Air Force.

It is important to note that this preview of future warfare emphasizes the priority to be placed on all aspects of the acquisition process working closely with research, development technology, and operations.

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Chapter 6

Media Techniques and the Future of Information Technology

- **Media Techniques**
- **The White House Model**
- **Congress**
- **The Pentagon**
- **Special Interest Groups**
- **Where are the Media and New Information Technologies Heading?**

6

MEDIA TECHNIQUES AND THE FUTURE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Media Techniques

The military and the media argue over issues of credibility, pride, sensitivity, embarrassment and security classification. The results can be publicly and politically delicate, even nasty. Such conflicts not only affect policy, programs and budgets, they reach the halls of Congress and often trickle down to the taxpayers on Main Street. These voters may or may not have any idea what the problem is, but in today's media outreach the citizenry is bombarded with negative news about Washington and not without effect. All of these conditions at one time or another can impact on the defense systems acquisition process.

In trying to introduce understanding, logic and order to the current system, it is perhaps best to outline how the several sides (media, government, corporations and special interest groups) operate in today's communications environment. In the last three decades, much has changed in the media and their approach to news, information gathering and dissemination. While the media have been busy practicing their profession, the people and institutions the media cover have slowly come to an understanding of the newsman's trade. This knowledge is based on a need to separate truth from falsehood, fact from fiction. It is not always easy. Ultimately, if you are involved in media relations, you learn what you must do in order to survive. Survival is a learned skill.

The media's role is to seek out stories, controversies, wars and foreign correspondence, and, yes, even a defense systems acquisition scandal. It is a

journalist's duty to accomplish these assignments with balance, objectivity, accuracy and attention to the facts.¹

This process takes place through press conferences, interviews, quoting other news sources, investigations, and off the record as well as open conversations. There is also the highly effective technique of "leaking" (a team sport "inside the Beltway") wherein a willing informant will pass information to a newsman. The informant will privately convey information ranging from the truth, rumors, and deliberately false stories, to classified information although this is clearly illegal.

Media people will also occasionally use a prohibited technique known as "plagiarism," involving basically the "theft" of other journalists' work. It sometimes combines all of the above. Two *Boston Globe* columnists, for example, in the recent past were either dismissed or suspended, one for allegedly making up a story, the other allegedly plagiarized information for a column.

Journalistic successes depend on access to and availability of sources, willing or not. When, in early 1993, President Clinton's first director of communications closed off his White House office area to the press, they were effectively denied access. As a result, friction immediately developed into an anger that generally marked the president's first term.

Reporters spend a great deal of time developing contacts and sources against the day they might assist the journalist in finding or checking stories.

Over time, there usually develop relationships between journalists and their contacts ranging from friendship to arms-length professional acquaintanceship. One thing you can count on: a reporter denied one avenue of discovery will try another of the several techniques already mentioned to get his or her story.

The downside to this process is unfortunately less positive and subject to question. These tricks of the trade include, but are not limited to, taking quotations out of context; selective editing; skillful tape, film and photo editing; and altering and editorializing in straight news stories in order to influence readers' or viewers' opinions.

The "trade" does not condone such tactics, but they do happen. This suggests that there is no such thing as a completely objective story for the simple reason that journalists, like the rest of us, are all different: different ethnic backgrounds, different cultures and religions, different upbringing and education and different outlooks on life, including biases and prejudices. It is a wonder that the media as a whole strive to be as objective as they are.

This background is now in transition. The steady advance of communications technology is forcing basic changes on those who report the news as well as those being reported. One need only look at how Washington "inside the Beltway" is covered today, as compared to just 40 years ago. Eleanor Clift, a former White House correspondent and panelist on the popular but loud weekly public affairs show "The McLaughlin Group," put it this way: "When I first came to cover the White House, we used the new electric IBM typewriter to type copy. There was no C-SPAN. There was no CNN."²

Today, the equipment has been miniaturized and made more portable. It is now possible to relay coverage and disseminate breaking events instantly. The use of a new generation of communications satellites, and the addition of computer web pages and "feed back" chat rooms constitutes an increasingly important link between news organizations

and their audiences. The cable news channels are particularly fond of this technique since it establishes rapport with viewers.

While daily newspapers have decreased over the past 50 years, the number of television and radio stations by 1999 had dramatically increased to 12,615 radio stations and 1,616 TV stations. The number of these Internet stations with web pages has simply exploded. Three hundred-fifty of the TV stations are on the net, including 165 Public Broadcasting System (PBS) stations. This is amazing considering that in 1946 there were only six TV stations on the air. The breakdown is equally fascinating. Of the 12,615 radio stations, 4,783 are AM, 5,766 are FM and 2,066 are education FM.³

In order to hold readership, the print medium, now overwhelmingly morning papers, had to reconfigure itself, as did *USA Today*, the first TV age major newspaper. *The New York Times* added more local coverage and photos, breaking a century-old tradition. *The Washington Post*, increasingly sensitive to the suburbs where most of middle-class America lives, added coverage of nearby counties in Virginia and Maryland. The movement to the suburbs, incidentally, was the major economic cause for the demise of America's afternoon newspapers. They could not compete with the evening commute, nor could they compete with early evening TV news shows and commuter radio news.

Newspapers, pressured by economics and television, began to develop more inclusive wrap-around stories, more backgrounders, more editorial comment, more columns, and more letters to the editor (now being emulated by computers with chat rooms and e-mail).

At century's end, when a new generation of readers and viewers "let the good times roll," the spectacle of bad news (earthquakes, plane crashes, civil strife, discredited government, genocide, scandal and corruption) was common fare, designed to capture audience and ratings.⁴

That is essentially the state of play today. Interestingly, the electronic media attempt to hold and increase market share is not easy with today's proliferating cable news and special interest channels and competition with cable and dish television. The people and institutions the media cover are essentially doing the same thing to protect themselves and to get out their version of the story.

Establishment news sources, such as the White House, the Pentagon, Congress, the AFL-CIO and the American Medical Association, etc., are able to use any and all of the informational techniques in support of their issues and themes, just as any other public affairs outlet does. They use the same techniques. These techniques generally fall into these categories:

- news management
- spin control
- sound bites and photo ops
- leaks
- models of persuasion
 - The White House
 - Congress
 - The Pentagon
 - Special Interest Groups

The White House Model

News management in this century, as we have seen, dates from President Woodrow Wilson's efforts to sway world audiences in favor of his minority view to make "the world safe for democracy" and to base the post-World War I political order on his idealistic world view.⁵

President Wilson's efforts to manage news may today be viewed as naïve and primitive. Nonetheless, for the time, it was successful and led to a restructuring of Europe. In retrospect, historians

may argue whether this was a good idea or bad, but it happened, and it happened because the "message" carried the day. The message constituted the first modern global effort to manage the news and to influence audiences. This "campaign" approach to news led directly to the rise of both the advertising and public relations industries in America.

The next major advance in news management, as earlier discussed, came during President Franklin Roosevelt's tenure. It was based on his clever and effective command of the new radio medium and his manipulation of the White House press corps.⁶

News management also accompanied the rise of the post World War II generation of media personalities and politicians making use of television. Electoral campaigning became national since the campaigns were being presented simultaneously to all regions of the country, often reaching upwards of 70 million people.⁷ The new political weapons used were perception and image — psychological and political phenomena that dealt more with a candidate's persona than with the issues.

Today, news management is routinely accepted in any White House. Every president since Kennedy⁸ has systematically employed it, some more successfully than others. For instance, compare Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon's use of the media with Ronald Reagan's superb ability to communicate and manage news simply by his presence and his good humor.

Once news management became a political given, successive White Houses slowly developed what has become a working model, encompassing a range of techniques from spin control to leaks and sound bites. All these communication tactics are today considered normal and programmable, which the media accept but with a sense of cynicism and hypocrisy.

Spin control, for example, is a calculated and planned effort to put forth to the media a daily,

proactive, favorable, expedient political point of view in order to influence or confound the media's audiences. The media are tied to time constraints and the news cycle, so spin control is relatively easy to use; a White House briefing, a Pentagon news conference, a talking head PA news program or a corporate publicity release. The spin shows up in the media either in whole or in part, depending on the reporter. Coupled with this spin technique is the more recent tactical use of "rapid response" teams, pioneered effectively by the Clinton Administration with its habit of perpetual campaigning. The continuance of a campaign after an election utilizing a "war room" was a novel development making it possible for immediate political response to negative news stories and political challenges. Modern communications, with its need to exploit news and keep the story moving, demands no less. This mode of operation that allows practitioners to "stay on message" is here to stay.

The PA operations understand and use secondary techniques such as "sound bites" and "photo ops." These tactics are designed to capture media time and thus public attention. "Sound bites" are a speechmaker's dream. The technique aims to provide readers and viewers, as well as media, web sites and newsrooms, with short, punchy phrases or sentences that capture the spirit of a speech or its underlying issue. Usually "sound bites" are seconds long (perhaps no more than 7-9 seconds on the air). For political consultants and speechwriters "sound bites" have become a political specialty, and speechwriter "sound bites" have become a professional sub-specialty. Writers are hired to fill this function alone.⁹

"Photo ops" are just what you might think. A "photo op" is a carefully staged event designed to present the person, problem, issue or program in the best light possible. "Photo ops" cover everything from a White House Rose Garden signing ceremony, to an aircraft corporation's rollout of a new fighter plane, to a picture of a president with a sports figure, or a smiling candidate attending a

military pass in review. There is no harm done; they may even help the cause they seek to depict. Basically "photo ops" are marginal, although widely used.

"Leaks" or "leaking" is a venerable and favored technique that media and government have used for political or "ad hominem" advantage since Abraham Lincoln sat in the White House. A leak, if found accurate, may also be used as an exclusive story, although exclusives need not come from a leak. Historically, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and CBS were the favored leak outlets. Today, because of demographics and national coverage, *USA Today* and the *Washington Times* are also in the loop.

As a technique, leaking can be a powerful and effective tool. It is usually employed to bolster or expose some delicate political issue. In the negative sense, leaking is used to embarrass someone or something.

The author was at one time an official leaker. A leaker in the official sense was and is a sort of media "designated hitter." He fills in the factual gaps, suggests counter-arguments, and even divulges classified tidbits considered useful and expedient in addressing either trouble or opportunity. The classic example of a campaign of leaks goes back to the late 1940s Navy-Air Force fight over respective roles and mission in air warfare. The Navy established a secret war room that produced counter-arguments and "gotchas" against the Air Force that were then leaked to the press and Congress. It was effective until exposed, but in the end it helped save naval aviation.

Anyone can play leaking, and most everyone does. Leaking may be necessary and useful, but it is not for amateurs, nor is it always what might be called fair. However, as retired Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY) told MSNBC network interviewer, Chris Matthews, at the 2000 Republican Convention, "Politics ain't beanbag."

In summary, the “White House” model amounts to a communications full-court press. Every conceivable means is used to make a point from surrogate spokesmen like attorney David Kendall, defender of President Clinton during his impeachment trial, to White House communiqués sent to every media outlet in the land. Now it is possible to post information on the various political web sites, including the White House site. On the latter point, the use of web sites and the Internet to pass or receive information is an important development. This is a relatively new arrangement but certain to grow. In 1999, the computer industry, as cited in the *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.*, estimated that 197 million Americans (out of 281 million) now have access to and use of the Internet. The use of political e-mail came into its own during the 2000 presidential campaign when quick response e-mail was sent to 2,000 media addresses rebutting candidates’ arguments.

The communications phenomenon of “talking back” represents a distinctly new opportunity to enlarge the democratic dialogue. Growing rapidly since the 1992 election, political “talking back” has now become part of wired America. Technology has allowed the public to respond to news, politics or anything else by simply tapping into the mass media. Talk radio became extremely popular in the ‘80s and ‘90s and it is everywhere available. Television pioneered the “talking head” model by assembling an advocate of some cause, a critic of the same cause, a so-called expert or specialist to lend balance and, of course, the journalist master of ceremonies. The White House often tries to lead the news by providing Administration speakers for these programs. These shows have become immensely popular and have given rise to a controversial new professional status called “celebrity journalists” who often emerge as much more powerful or more well known than the people they cover. This development has also led to a sharp increase in well-known political figures who, at the end of their public service, declare themselves on-air political commentators, a mixed blessing insofar as newsmen are concerned, because of the

possibility of a special political bias entering their copy or commentaries.¹⁰

There is a direct, potentially useful, application of these innovative developments to defense systems acquisition programs and to the acquisition workforce. Increased and systematic use of OUSD (AT&L) web sites can spread the acquisition story in detail to the millions who daily surf. PMs can develop public affairs approaches to Internet users explaining their programs, literally setting up dialogues with interested people. It is a way of easily reaching people across the country — people who otherwise would never know or care about defense systems acquisition programs, their purposes, their costs and their military applications.

Congress

As organized as is the “White House” model of information dissemination, it is the Congress of the United States that day in, day out provides America with the story of democracy in action. It is not always a pretty sight. As Chancellor Otto von Bismarck is reputed to have observed in the mid 19th Century, “Making laws is like making sausage; you do not want to see what goes into it.” But this is exactly what people in the Information Age view through C-SPAN, a public service funded solely by the cable industry. C-SPAN covers Congress when it is in session. It covers select committee hearings, and it gives the widest possible coverage of political and legislative views of the 545 elected members and delegates of the House of Representatives and the Senate. A sizeable segment of the American people, estimated at 10 percent,¹¹ avidly watch these proceedings. Consequently, voters who have never visited the Capitol, never met a member of Congress, or indeed never knew by name his or her own congressperson or senator can now turn on C-SPAN at 7:00 a.m. east coast time and sit transfixed, watching the proceedings in amazement or anger. Not only that, people can call up the C-SPAN web site and ask questions directly. They can also communicate with C-SPAN by e-mail.

This televised process is a “first” historically. It opens Congress to the citizenry. It allows them to check what’s going on if they so choose. It is what the Founding Fathers (a term coined by journalist-president Warren G. Harding) envisioned. While there are moments when Congress wishes that C-SPAN and television would go away, the civic advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

Members of Congress thrive on publicity. It’s manna from heaven in terms of name (and face) recognition, reelectability and, not so oddly, fund-raising. If the member occasionally bombs on TV, so be it. There will always be another photo op.

Congress has worked out a system that functions reasonably well and generally satisfies the country. As any journalist covering “the Hill” will tell you, Congress is an ever running “three-ring circus,” fun, if hectic, to cover. There are 545 personalities, in effect “talking heads,” each with an agenda eager to express his/her views to the voter. The reporters are the gatekeepers; the end game is reelection and often a shot at higher office.

All this makes for a media dream world; the members know it, and over time they have fashioned their own communications model, as outlined below.

First, there are the political opportunities put in place by Congress itself. They range from the daily one-minute speech allowed each member, if desired, at the beginning of the day when Congress is in session, to the 60 minute “special orders” speech at the end of the day when Congress has gone home, and the 70-90 second feed by satellite to home district radio and TV stations giving the local viewer the impression “that he is there.” Statements in the Congressional Record are a long tradition, as are “prepared remarks” on issues or legislation, the inevitable franked newsletter, and now the web site.

The corridors of the Capitol and the Capitol steps are wonderful publicity locations for hometown delegations, state athletic champs and members of

the junior year high school class bus tour to see government in action.

Phone banks reaching out to the “grass roots” are effective and impressive and they work. By the same token, today it’s simple for any constituent to call or write his or her representative. Individual messages, especially if handwritten, are meaningful to elected officials. Political computer databases are gold mines of voter information: party preferences, voting records, funding information, and tips as to how closely a voter follows the political scene.

All of these techniques have now become standard operating procedures with generally positive results. These actions enhance a member’s stature, name recognition, positive attitude toward his or her state or district; and this does nothing to inhibit fund-raising ability and his or her image back home, or reputation in the corridors of Congressional power. Fundraising, in fact, has more to do with a member’s committee assignments than photos taken with 4-H Club winners, a tactic which has more to do with electability. The Congressional model has long been in place. It works well in terms of getting the word out through a number of outlets, and feeds into a unique Capitol Hill medium. Capitol Hill has two independent, privately owned newspapers, *The Hill* and *Roll Call*, covering the Congress. The net result is that Congress is reported on daily with 545 members competing for publicity.

Congress, insofar as information and political news are concerned, is the ultimate political creature. Constitutionally established as the first branch of government, Congress now works with the media, generally seen as the Fourth Branch of Government. Congress controls the taxpayers’ money through the authorization, appropriations and oversight processes that annually approve 13 major revenue budgets covering government’s operations. The one who owns the budget toys wins the game, so to speak.

Congress understands this full well. As a result, Congress is by nature a honeycomb of facts, rumors,

compromises, special interest groups, political ambitions and political dreams. Given such circumstances, it is small wonder that some 1996 journalists of all stripes are registered to operate in the Congressional press galleries.¹²

To serve these public ends, elected officials are supported by personal staff both in Washington and in the home districts. Committees are also staffed depending on majority or minority status. Each member of Congress has a press spokesman. As a whole, government television and radio facilities are available, not only to televise the activities of both houses, but to allow and facilitate taping and the distribution to home districts information and news about what Congress and, of course, what the members are doing for the voter.

Congress is wired to help each congressperson communicate almost instantly with his/her constituents (newspapers, franked correspondence, taped interviews, district newsletters) and to far wider audiences (talk shows and Sunday public affairs newsmaker shows). To this communications “free fire zone” must be added the coverage of the private, for-profit media. The media interplay on Capitol Hill is totally engaging. There is always another act in a never-ending play. Journalists enjoy covering Congress, although it is hard, difficult, long-houred work. As Steve Roberts, former *New York Times* White House and Congressional correspondent, once remarked to the author, “They [the Congresspersons] love to talk. They love to make news and they do. After all, they are political animals.”

Congress triangulates. Retired Senator Patrick Moynihan coined the phrase “the Iron Triangle,” meaning the natural collaboration among legislators (and their staffs), special interest groups (lobbyists), and the bureaucracy (the executive branch of government). It’s a natural alliance, and its purpose pure and simple is to advance their own programs, budgets and agendas. In a sense, it is how government really functions. It works, not perfectly of course, and certainly not always with the common

good in mind, but it can be viewed as democracy in action. The point is Congress has a loud voice and knows exactly how to use it.

However, the Congress cannot compete with the White House from a focused communications or media point of view. Nonetheless, Congress is able to communicate extremely well in that most vital area: reelection. Congress communicates constantly with the voters at home. This is a political plus. Congress and the media have had a love affair for a very long time but it is only now that the new technologies make it possible for the public to realize the extent of this arrangement. Voters now can join the fun or the fight. Today, Congress is literally being bombarded by communications: the good, bad and ugly. In fact, it is not unheard of that congressional offices weigh their mail to judge volume of interest pro and con. But in that mass of mail, there is a danger. For example, retired Congressman William Whitehurst of Virginia, long-time member of the House Armed Service Committee, once remarked to me, “I receive thousands of letters, cards, faxes and phone calls a month. Most deal with the regular business of Congress. All you need, however, is one crank message from one disturbed person and it could be all over for you.”

The Pentagon

This guide is essentially about the interface between the Defense Department, especially defense systems acquisition, and the media to include the Internet in its many forms. Throughout the guide, there are examples of media-public affairs dealings. Pentagon PA and Pentagon top leadership are involved daily in the complete spectrum of substantive and informational activities plus the ever-present reality of political and bureaucratic sensitivities.

The DoD has an annual budget of over \$300 billion, with a vast array of weapons and defense systems in research or in production, with huge inventories on hand and over a million servicemen and women in uniform, touching in one way or another every city and hamlet in the nation. It is absolutely

imperative that DoD communicate constantly and effectively with the American people and the nation at large. To do less would, over time, weaken the bonds between the military and the people.

Thus, there is a press corridor in the Pentagon where reporters have desks and facilities to cover defense activities and where war correspondents of past conflicts are honored. Each military service has its own office of information/PA as does DoD. In addition to all this, the Pentagon, through the Services, provides such public activities as lecturers, officials to be interviewed, military bands, special service displays and exhibitions.

Media operations from the Pentagon's point of view are quite different. As reflected in Chapter 1, Pentagon and individual Service requirements dictate a more formalized structure with absolute loyalty to the chain of command and to designated authority. This approach does not lend itself to proactive, congressional-type PA. The DoD system generally works more deliberately, with due diligence toward clearances and keeping higher command in the loop. This is sometimes a functional disadvantage since media coverage and information dissemination are keyed to the news cycle, mentioned earlier. But when looked at practically in a structured, rigid environment, suitable control of information and careful monitoring of access become paramount. In the Gulf War, there was an enormous amount of information disseminated to media outlets. However, field access by correspondents was controlled; it was not considered practical to allow reporters to wander the battlefield unescorted or to conduct spontaneous interviews with the troops. By the same token, it must be observed that the Marines managed to observe the spirit of the directives, if not the letter. However, it is the opinion of Barry Zorthian, former director of Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) Vietnam who was an official PA observer of the Gulf operation, that had the war continued longer, the controlled access policy would have collapsed because of media pressure.

Pentagon PA is a full blown operation covering the entire spectrum of defense-related information activities, from community relations, freedom of information requirements, and news dissemination of all types including Service newspapers, to magazines and hometown Service news. This news is complemented by parallel information offices in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps. It is a large interactive organizational structure that operates at all levels of command, from acquisition systems to combat commands and speakers' public appearances.

Pentagon PA, by definition, faces the classic democratic dilemma: free media access at all times versus the military requirement to safeguard classified information and sensitive tactical and operational facts. This is basically an unresolvable dilemma. The press wants it all now, and the military, by nature, is not at all certain that's possible or desirable. So a natural adversarial relationship develops in this era of endless demand for news to fill time. It waxes and wanes like a sine curve. The residual resentments of Vietnam are still present. Beyond that, the military, a conservative tightly knit culture, will always try to protect and control its information base, a base which in modern war becomes a cyber space weapon. The coming of the Internet and satellite age makes this task of control increasingly more difficult and uncertain.

While this guide mainly concerns itself with the history of the media and the growing confluence of mass communications with DoD, specifically with PA aspects of OUSD (AT&L), there is one vital media lesson, above all, that the acquisition workforce should monitor closely.

To put it bluntly, there are communications dangers out there, dating from former Secretary of Defense William Perry's post-Cold War decision to constrict the defense industry sector and, at the same time, to initiate far-reaching acquisition reforms, both in the name of cost reduction.

These decisions now in effect create a field of media interest considerably different from the usual sort of OUSD (AT&L) and PA output. Normally, AT&L output is generally put on “go,” and facts on projects and programs pour out for the use of the technical contracting and business media. This is fine until something goes wrong as in the long-past Navy A-12 case, which captured national headlines.

Curiously, it was a long-held cultural concept that started the A-12 unraveling. At a House Armed Services Committee meeting, held on 18 April 1991 and widely reported, the project’s program manager bluntly reported, “...I am trained to accept the chain of command and accede to the wishes of ...guys with three stars and two stars...” (*Washington Post* 4/19/91).

The PM had reported the cost overruns six times to his superiors who told him, “until we could develop a solution to the problems...we would pursue other topics in our conversations [with top Navy officials].”

The crux of the problem is standard bureaucratic operating procedure, done at all levels of DoD. This problem became, among other things, a major Navy acquisition PA problem. It represents, of course, an exceptional case study, but these things do happen, and these problems must be handled because DoD, Congress, the public, and the media are involved. These episodes don’t go away; they must be handled. In this case, it wasn’t. The program was cancelled and heads rolled.

Often, public assertions by senior officers represent either an OUSD (AT&L)-PA opportunity or possibly a PA problem. Just think about the Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) controversy and its impact on various interest groups and public constituencies. There are hungry media out there in the new, wired, world; they need constant care and feeding.

Special Interest Groups

There is a powerful and growing area of special interest advocacy. It covers everything from standard government relations (a Washington-based corporate staff monitoring and interpreting policies, regulations and law for company leadership) to special pleadings through high-level contacts. Advocacy includes legislative lobbying, influencing contents of congressional legislation, grass roots populist movements for the “greens”; the anti-NAFTA groups, Lockheed Martin, General Motors or Raytheon, etc.; plus the usual techniques of letter writing, speech writing, and provision of technical information to legislators. Then there is that most crucial of all efforts, lobbyists counting votes in support of or against projected legislation.

Special interest groups, as we have seen, are often referred to as “the Fifth Branch” of government. Whatever the apt phrase, we are really talking about the lobbyists discussed in Chapter 4. While lobbying has been around since the early days of the republic, it is in the modern era that lobbying has achieved a powerful niche in the affairs of government. Today’s reasons are simple and direct: power, influence, and money. Our society has become more complex, and issues more complicated — affecting many, often conflicting, groups and interests. Lobbying has grown to parallel the affairs and reach of government. Lobbying works both ways. Congress needs information, favors or assistance. Both lobbyists and their government counterparts (legislative liaison offices) are pleased to assist.

Central to most lobbying efforts (except for those carried out secretly) is the need to deal with information, facts and arguments to persuade someone to change something that ultimately benefits one side more than another. That means a serious effort must be mounted to reach, inform, persuade and influence groups of politicians, groups of citizens and, obviously, the opposition. This means media

and the Internet. It means everything from interviews and press conferences, one-on-one backgrounders, “planting” stories, or “grass roots” campaigns back home. Phone banks may call voters on a specific issue, ascertain their views, and then immediately provide the voter with a telephonic connection to a representative or senator’s office to express positive views supportive of the issue.

Special-interest advocacy has grown as a technique — given the issue, resources, energy and money. Success depends heavily on the media’s attention. High drama, demonstrations and exposés become centerpieces; and the media are served with partisan interviews, news releases, punditry, surveys, polls and “talking heads.” Twenty-four-hour cable news channels find such events exhilarating because they use time, often show dramatic footage and explosive dialogue, and draw audience and ratings.

It seems likely that this “Fifth Branch” that influences operations of government will experience a shakeout sooner or later that will address the uncontrolled use of money (so-called “soft” monies). When a senatorial campaign can cost up to \$80 million or more (California) for a job paying about \$145 thousand a year, something is out of balance. But for the moment, the “Fifth Branch” is alive, well and still growing.

Finally, lobbying firms are generally divided into five types: law firms (practicing primarily lobbying not law), boutique firms (small, highly specialized, big on contacts), corporate lobbying and government relations offices (traditional lobbying), and the one-stop shopping firms (combining advertising, public affairs, speechwriting, and grass roots advocacy). This last category is a relatively recent addition to Washington, but the money is there and the business is growing. Unregistered freelance or part-time lobbyists most often work out of home or a small office and have specialized contacts or information (usually based on long federal or state service); although many of these operators drop out as their old contacts retire or are transferred.

It should be recognized that the federal (and state, county and city) government has its own form of lobbying, suitably named legislative liaison, theoretically narrower in terms of what can and cannot be done and prevented by law from direct appeals and pressure to influence appropriations. Such government efforts range from the White House office of legislative liaison to the military legislative liaison offices located in the Capitol.

Where Are the Media and New Information Technology Heading?

As high-speed information technologies proliferate, a basic restructuring of the tele-communications industry, broadly defined, is taking place worldwide. A dramatic series of changes, both corporate and technical, will totally reorient the industry. The world will soon be using the various systems already fairly common in Europe and America.

In assessing the future of various media techniques and their accompanying technologies, be mindful of how various government agencies handle media affairs. There are differences. We are not talking about the “White House” model here. This is not surprising, since all agencies are subject to the political chain of command flowing down from the Executive Office of the President. Agencies are responsible for different missions, objectives, and the political nuances and goals to be carried out by cabinet offices and the other bureaucracies. There is a pecking order within government. Some agencies, especially in national security, are simply more important than others.

Consider the following high-tech building blocks: a fundamental worldwide communications network is already in place and busily at work. This must be seen as the first phase of the revolution. Consider the daily hits on web sites, e-mails, global electronic transfers of currency, and e and dot.com transactions. Consider also the online newspapers available for instant news or daily editorials. Everyone is downloading video clips and

music. Home-grown photographers with cameras post scanned photos, with billions of hits daily. More change is to come in portability, size, and range of working options within the decade — fiber optics, laser switches and broadband applications with ability to deliver faster and globally — from text to film to still pictures and voice to private hand-held receptors. In the United States, more people than ever — 197 million,¹³ — are interconnected, and the trend is global. In China alone, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, it is not inconceivable that by mid-century a billion or more Chinese will be connected.

Every aspect of military life is being affected by these advances, from acquisition and program management to inventory control, on-time deliveries and precise location of moving vehicles and aircraft through the Global Positioning System. Television and radio are obviously affected through new delivery systems (the Web, direct TV and satellites). Newspapers are engaged in serious efforts to upgrade and computerize print machinery and reorient news, given the impact of TV and the Internet, so as to retain or capture audiences. Television programming is just beginning to undergo a much needed reappraisal and redefinition of con-

tent, form, and some measure of self control. The new-age role for journalists (print and broadcast), celebrities and journeymen is still in process. The same holds true for the military. The job is nowhere near complete and the results are not in; but like everything else, there is an “up side” and a “down side,” as in the videos and music presently directed to young audiences. For the military, there continues to be a serious security and “hacker” problem to be mastered.

On the industry and corporate side of the revolution, the changes are startling. Traditional telephone systems are likely to be replaced by micro chips, fiber optics, and digitalization. In the future, phone, computer and television will likely be integrated into one huge global system. For example, residential phones are already considered primitive, giving way to global portable hand-held phones.

All these innovations will redefine how we communicate, who will communicate and who won't. This will set up the “haves” and “have nots” of the Information Age that already carries serious military and economic implications for the world.

ENDNOTES

1. The journalist's Code of Ethics, as such, has largely disappeared. The code was drafted as the "Canons of Journalism" created by the American Society of Newspaper Publishers in 1923. See, for example, John Morrill and Ralph Barney, *Ethics and the Press*. New York, Hastings House, 1975, pp. 27–28.
2. Talk given by Ms. Clift at the Capitol Hill Club to a group of military officers and senior civil servants, 8 December 1998.
3. These figures tell the story of the electronic revolution's surge. See pp. B258 and B261 in *Broadcasting and Cable Year Book, 2000*. Ellicott City, MD, R. R. Bowker, 2000.
4. Comments made to author by Syd Davis, former NBC Washington Bureau Chief and retired Program Manager, Voice of America, 14 June 2000.
5. Edward Bernays, *Biography of an Idea: Memories of a Public Relations Counsel*, Chapter 22.
6. Thomas Corcoran, known to history as "Tommy the Cork," was one of Roosevelt's tight little group of a baker's dozen of White House special assistants who assisted the President in managing World War II. Today, the White House staff, including those detailed from other agencies, runs to thousands. Conversation with Corcoran, 21 May 1973.
7. White, Theodore. *The Making of the President 1960*. New York, Atheneum, 1961, pp. 279–283.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 318–320.
9. It works both ways. Journalists often ask "think tank" political experts or law professors for "sound bites" for use in their columns or on-air responses. The classic examples of early "sound biting" are to be found in the prose of William Safire, John McLaughlin and Pat Buchanan, all speechwriters for Richard Nixon. A more balanced current example is Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, who is considered by many in the media as the best in the business. One of his associates once commented to me "He speaks in sound bites."
10. The "Imus in the Morning Show" (MSNBC) interview with former White House advisor, Paul Begala, 10 September 2000.
11. Estimate obtained from C-SPAN, 8 August 2000.
12. Figures obtained from Senate's Secretary's Office, 21 August 2000.
13. *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.* Washington, GPO, 1999, p. 582.

Chapter 7

National Security, Public Policy and Public Opinion

- **The Public Policy Process**
- **The Role of Polls, Surveys and Public Opinion in Decision Making**
- **The Media's Role in Policy and Program Planning**

7

NATIONAL SECURITY, PUBLIC POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINION

The Public Policy Process

Public policy today is as much a function of public approval and support as it is of deliberate decision making. As recently as the start of the Korean War (1950–1953), public consensus generally approved national policy as it had in World War II. Decisions regarding defense and security were usually made by the White House and the national security apparatus, with Congressional collaboration (more or less) and marginal public involvement with the issues. Traditionally, the American people voted an Administration into office and left it alone to make the tough calls, subject to voter approval every two or four years.

In the author's opinion, this process, comfortable as it may have been, is gone. Today, policy and decision making are literally made in the public arena, and woe to the decision maker or government agency that fails to take public opinion into account.

Both ill informed and well informed opinions play an increasingly pivotal role in decision making. Witness Vietnam, Somalia, Haiti, the air war over Kosovo and Serbia, and the war against terrorism where opinion ultimately helped drive policy.

This increased public involvement has become a key political factor in arriving at national security decisions and obviously at major political decisions. War is politics by other means, as Clausewitz observed in his classic work *On War*, and that includes public opinion and public morale.¹ The fog of war, another Clausewitzian axiom, refers to the standard friction and confusion found on any

battlefield; but in today's world, it includes the ebb and flow of domestic public opinion. This has been a hard lesson taught to us dramatically by Chinese Communist leader Mao Tse-Tung and Vietnam's General Vo Nguyen Giap, both masters of peoples and political warfare. The teachings of Osama bin Laden are still in the making.

In the United States, the decision to be made is rarely couched in terms of warfare but often in terms of political expediency and compromise. The influencing of opinion becomes central to swaying the people and convincing the Congress. It has become a standard operating procedure. No political leader worth the title would be caught today without his pollster and political consultant, a quite different reality from the days of Harry Truman and Franklin Roosevelt.

Consider the public stakes, for example, in the decisions that must be made regarding a national missile defense system. Everyone is involved. The public must in some measure agree. The Pentagon must develop the plan based upon the policy. The Congress must appropriate the money. The corporate infrastructure must see to its defense and contractor interests. Critics must be neutralized, if possible. And international interests must be brought on board. This is no easy task, and it is at some point done in full public and media view, with a carefully developed communications plan to sell and defend the issue.

Public policy and defense decision making (e.g., defense systems acquisition reform) have undergone a subtle but far-reaching change in the last decade. The impact of decisions made (from budgets

to conflicts) has become much more important since Vietnam because of public involvement and public fallout, here and abroad. Whereas, historically, PA has organizationally stood largely on the periphery of DoD's political inner circle, today there is solid evidence that public affairs has become an integral part of the policy and the decision-making process, made necessary by an always inquiring media and a fear of potential negative fallout if public issues are not handled properly. More and more public affairs is at the center of the interplay.² Edward R. Murrow remarked to President John F. Kennedy upon assuming Directorship of the U.S. Information Agency, "I want to be in on the takeoffs, not just the landings."³

The PA does not simply handle the media, put out the facts, keep breaking news under review, and try to assure positive stories regarding the military, its operations and its programs. Today, large audiences with diverse opinions are tuned in. People will react if they are not happy with either policy or performance.⁴

There is little done, involving the formation of White House policy, that isn't screened for public affairs value or potential trouble before it is made public. No press spokesperson charged with conveying news and information to the public by way of the media will ever stand up and "wing" a message or talk off the top of his or her head. Most often, any such official statements will be carefully vetted by aides for policy correctness, content, public acceptability, and political effect. Public opinion polling, focus groups, and survey results are never very far from such meetings. Too much is at stake politically.

Today, a more sophisticated media community and a somewhat better informed public combine to massage and interpret news and information more skeptically and critically. This, in turn, puts more pressure on policy positions and the ultimate decision. This is as true of business as it is of defense or of any established institution or bureaucracy (Recall the Ford-Firestone SUV tire fiasco

as an example of how *not* to do it). Could this happen to the defense systems acquisition community?

The media, for their part, see it as their duty to examine, investigate and question governmental or corporate decisions and the ensuing information flow. One need not look far for examples: the infamous Air Force toilet seat and the indestructible coffee pot and the overpriced hammer. Or for that matter, the coverage of the disastrous CNN story on "Tailwind," alleging American soldiers in Vietnam used nerve gas on so-called American defectors. In that particular story, people from the government, the public, the network, the media, and many former soldiers joined to expose the story as false.

The emergence of public policy, as well as its counterpart in corporate policy (as, for example, the Microsoft anti-trust case), is closely tied to improved communications techniques, allowing for increased public involvement and awareness. This evolution has had a dramatic effect on governmental affairs. It makes it possible for the media, through C-SPAN, PBS and CNN, for example, to present a greater array of sometimes negative or critical information to the public here and abroad.

This reality, in turn, plays a role in the decision-making process, requiring decision makers, as they make their decisions, to be increasingly aware of the impact of the media on public thinking and of the critical requirement to involve PA in the entire process. This is necessary because news and information have become part of the unending 24-hour news cycle. Newer cable channels such as MSNBC, CNBC, and Fox live for the next big story to unfold, since failure to find one, or to drag it out too long, could lead to a loss of audience, ratings and profits.

The Role of Polls, Surveys and Public Opinion in Decision Making

The early public opinion industry became the tool of corporate marketing and advertising, describing and shaping the profile of American consumerism.

So too did public opinion gradually engage the interest of newspapers, academia, political decision makers and the radio/TV networks. The reasons were not hard to find. Media-conscious Americans were exposed to more news and more action-oriented television events (wars, political campaigns), media programmers, news editors, and commentators. Now political consultants and campaign planners had become more curious, and then more demanding, in their quest to find out what “the people” thought about all manner of issues and problems. Public opinion had come into its own.

Initially, public polling had gotten off to a bad start. As far back as 1936, the magazine *Literary Digest* had taken a primitive political poll during the presidential election cycle, based on a rather skewed methodology that proved to be completely wrong.⁵ It very nearly doomed this emerging industry with its [then] relatively unsophisticated techniques. However, over time, more statistically correct techniques and methodologies evolved. The industry — led initially by the Roper, Gallup and Harris survey organizations — pioneered polling across the spectrum of American life, detailing who uses soap, and who the next president will be, or how popular are the Armed Forces.

There is an immense market for the data yielded by polls and surveys. Apart from journalists, professors, advertisers and government officials, there is a media world ever eager for new views of “who’s ahead” and “who’s behind” in everything conceivable. With its huge radio, TV, and print media base,⁶ corporate industry and the media are insatiable for new up-to-the-minute polling and survey data to dissect America. Polling is a statistical exercise; one must be cautious about using the data, remembering that margins of error give leads to a survey’s true accuracy. But assessing margins of error is not always done by media analysts. Polls often seem a continuing source of “the word,” used often to prove a political point of view. In fact, as noted earlier, a growing public cynicism about polls has caused pollsters to report increasing difficulty in getting demographically correct

samples, especially in telephone and overnight tracking surveys that have become popular as a result of the Clinton White House’s heavy daily usage.

Interestingly enough, survey historians and analysts have consistently reported that survey results concerning basic American values over roughly 50 years have been remarkably steady on the fundamental issues of our society — ranging from international involvement, war and peace, basic belief in religion and the family, faith in democratic principles, the work ethic, and a moral code. The two most divisive issues, over time, have been abortion and the Vietnam War. Throughout this half-century of surveying, the military and its service members have been held in high esteem.⁷ In other words, there is apparently in American society a hard core of unchanging values that constitutes the political center of the social spectrum.

Public opinion has acquired a tremendous, if not totally deserved, importance in American life, public policy formation, and decision making. Politicians run campaigns based upon polling data. Presidential State of the Union addresses are in some part based upon polling data, corporate markets depend on product and consumer profiles, and Congress lives by constituents’ likes and dislikes.

Polls can be deceptive, as we have seen. But in the absence of anything better or more up to the minute, they continue to be used, particularly by news organizations. The role of public opinion in official decision making is more complex, and today remains only a small part of the process. But it is there. As no decision-making body would be without its PA outlet, neither is any prudent decision maker without access to “reliable” public opinion data, whether hostile or friendly, illustrating both the current weaknesses and strengths of polls. Overseas polls exist and are becoming very common. In interpreting the results, due regard must be paid to history, culture, and political realities. The basic, if not the only, problem confronting public

policy decision makers is that public opinion does exist, and it is sometimes imperfectly measured. Relying on imperfect data is obviously a bad idea. Media and public affairs outlets should be careful since their credibility is at stake.

The DoD measuring of political public opinion, as such, is discouraged, as is lobbying for annual appropriations. It is quite true that the Services, as noted, maintain very visible Capitol Hill legislative liaison offices that render assistance to the membership and their staffs. The distinction between services rendered and lobbyists' advocacy is a nebulous one best left to philosophers.

Complex issues and modern communications techniques burrow deep into our newly wired world. In the year 2000, Microsoft, a large profitable new age software giant, was found guilty of anti-trust behavior by a U.S. federal judge. While appealing the case to an appellate court, Microsoft launched a multimillion dollar blitz to win national public opinion to its cause. Every conceivable technique was used, from publicity releases, full-page newspaper ads, Congressional lobbying, petitions and letter writing, to public relations firms, campaign donations to both political parties, use of lobbyist consultants and outside law firms, and live interviews of Microsoft leadership on news and cable channels.⁸ It rivaled the organized political attacks on the proposed national health care plan in President Clinton's first term (1992–96), and the ongoing fight for the Osprey V–22 aircraft. The lesson here for OUSD (AT&L) is always be prepared to mount sophisticated multi-media PA campaigns when required.

The objective of the Microsoft campaign was to rally popular support against the Department of Justice's position, and probably to influence the appeals process. This effort was of major league proportions and was carefully designed to send a message not only to Microsoft's legal antagonists but also to its competitors. It also sent an unintended message to any public or corporate policy decision maker and PA/media outlet that the influence

game of the future had not only changed in its expense and its intensity, but also in its political reach and public intent. Military please take note. The White House certainly will.

This is a lesson not to be lost on government and business. After a decade of off-Broadway political tryouts, hard-ball media efforts, negative advertising and opposition research have merged if a paying client desires to exploit the techniques available. After all, Microsoft itself had helped pioneer the field with the use of the Internet, its own online magazine, *Slate*, and its co-ownership with NBC of its own 24-hour cable news channel, MSNBC.

For any defense or corporate planner, these communications developments merit serious study since they cover all manner of techniques and issues management. The world of defense systems acquisition decision making, information dissemination and lobbying influence has unintentionally wandered onto a 21st Century communications battleground. These techniques, exploding on the marketplace with enormous power and range, are changing our world; and the defense systems acquisition community has no choice but to master the game. Recent relevant issues include the National Missile Defense Program, the Joint Strike Fighter development, and the ongoing debate over DoD's so-called procurement gap (described by General Colin Powell as "shoring up readiness and not investing in the future.")⁹ The entire wired world is now heavily engaged in globalization, world economic interdependence and the integration of modern communications into the arsenals of modern warfare.

Revolutionary changes made in the business and industrial world are literally restructuring corporate America. A current case in point is the immense task facing the acquisition community as the Homeland Defense Command concept develops, if it does. This will be a huge organizational and procurement effort with a large public agenda. Consider also the new communications powerhouses.

For example, AOL/Time-Warner — a publishing, film, and TV cable provider, and a mega communicator — openly challenged in 2000 the ABC network, owned by entertainment giant, Disney, over a matter of fees and money, while millions of paying television viewers were temporarily deprived of favorite TV entertainment shows without a hint of regret from the contending giants. In other areas, megas such as General Electric, Capitol Communications, Sony and Fox vie across the telecommunications spectrum for positions of control, power and profits. Merger consolidations and the fight for enhanced profits characterize the changes, inevitably lessening the power of the old-line networks CBS, NBC and ABC and their once proud national radio/TV news divisions.¹⁰ What is at stake here is not only a struggle for power and money, but a major consolidation and concentration of the communications and entertainment industries as a prelude to a likely attempt to control the information superhighway.¹¹ This effort to consolidate the electronic gates of information is completely unlike the growth of the 19th Century print medium. Here in TV-entertainment land, the competitors have an open track. Federal regulations are years behind developments despite Department of Justice and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) efforts to get a handle on this vast new information complex. The key issue, of course, is fear of monopolistic control of the world's airwaves.

The unintended consequences of this merger mania are serious. Not only do non-media corporations own these outlets with the potential of subtle editorial control, but the entertainment industry (not news or public affairs) has become the controlling force, save for the 24-hour news channels. Even there, there seems to be too much hype and repetition. In such an environment, public policy, public affairs output and news become muted in favor of sensation, scandal, soap operas, and Hollywood-oriented entertainment.

For the military, this is the new modern communications battleground upon which the media and the Armed Forces (more broadly labeled the national

infrastructure) will communicate, contest, fight and even do legal, political, intellectual and psychological battle.

It is quite obvious to anyone involved in the information and news reporting business that the rules of the past have changed; and world facts, data, and knowledge are at our fingertips, so much so that "information overload" is no longer an abstract concept. In fact, DoD's National Security Agency (NSA) is, according to investigative journalist Seymour Hersch, suffering from overload and an inability to process incoming data rapidly enough into useable current intelligence.¹²

Across the board, the technical revolution in American society has had, and will continue to have, an enormous impact on the media's coverage of defense activities and national decision making.

Journalists are now freer to access corporate boardrooms, Pentagon corridors and the next battlefields. They can do this with their own word processors, digital phones, satellite access codes and portable computers. Reporters and military officers can tap into press morgues (Lexus-Nexus) and the many encyclopedic databases available on the Internet. This access translates into a significant media advantage; it bypasses the physical restrictions used in the past to deny press access to the military. With background data instantly available to reporters, and with computerized photo scanning and e-mail in common usage, any effort to pursue reactive and evasive public affairs could be viewed as negative and intolerable by the computer-savvy media and quite possibly a computer-savvy public.

These new techniques have accidentally upgraded the media value of public protests and demonstrations with real-time consequences for television as well as for policy makers. The demonstrations against the World Trade Organization (WTO), which took place in Seattle in early 2000, garnered world headlines and film footage, overshadowing the meetings themselves. These protests were no accident. They were the result of very careful global

planning by a diverse cadre of political activists using the Internet, web pages and e-mail to rally support and presence — an effort that took authorities by surprise in its intensity and violence.¹³ The case of Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy who became the center of a political storm as to whether he should be returned to Cuba, is also instructive. For weeks crowds gathered in front of Elian's Miami residence in support of his cause. In Havana, thousands of protesting school children on Cuban TV were shown in real-time TV to U.S. audiences. The propaganda object in both cases was to marshal public opinion, pro or con, through extensive media coverage.

This new battleground is growing, diversifying and becoming more effective with its emotional impact and its ability to influence policy and decision making.

Defense systems acquisition decision making has been fortunate in that relatively little interest in the acquisition process is shown by the major media or activist groups. There have been few dominating national scandals or “waste, fraud and abuse” incidents to catch widespread public and media attention. However, that does not mean there weren't military situations that drew strong media attention and considerable controversy and criticism, some of it unexpected.

For example, there is the politics-tainted situation involving the Puerto Rican island of Vieques where activists demanded the Navy cease live-and-dummy-ammunition firings on its fleet training range. This issue went straight to the White House and the Congress. There was also the public argument regarding U.S. troop participation in the Bosnia-Kosovo-NATO operation requiring close presidential control of the deployment. Other recent defense-related issues that caught sizeable media attention and criticism were the deactivation of U.S. missile silos, the transportation of radioactive waste across the nation from California using heavily traveled public highways, and the never-ending, high-volume debate over

base closings involving Congressional elections and jobs.

In all of these cases, the Services and DoD were thrust into the political line of fire with heavy local news coverage and Washington political maneuvering. These examples are instructive in reflecting how easily technical, mid-level problems can escalate into major political incidents with the exploitation of concentrated media attention, especially television. A common lesson learned is anticipating such PA situations in the planning cycle.

This does not mean security from scrutiny. The acquisition process controls immense amounts of money. There is the huge corporate involvement, the multi-year contracts and the ever-present interest of Congress in accommodating constituents and maintaining employment. Public affairs planning is a matter of prudence and good management. For example past problems include the A-12, “Ill Wind,” the Anthrax vaccine issue and the Arsenal ship controversy.

This communications battleground can become a “hot zone” in one news cycle. Consider the speed with which the story of the alleged massacre of Korean War civilians hit the American and Korean media and the frantic official reaction to it, reaching as high as the Office of the Secretary of Defense. No one wants to experience this sort of potential political disaster, even after 50 years.

The Media's Role in Policy and Program Planning

In Chapter 6 we discussed the growing use of communications techniques in an attempt to control the media in order to present public policy decisions in a better light and protect policies or events under attack.

The media as a whole continue to function as the public's gateway to news and information and to perform their traditional public oversight role.

Today, the rapidly growing Internet is a source of legitimate news and comment, just as e-mail has emerged as an immensely popular medium of information exchange. As described earlier, the Pew Research Center has reported that Internet news is gradually replacing television news as the preferred carrier. While newspapers have lost readership over the past 60 years, they still hold firm with 63 percent of adults who read daily papers. The main reason seems to be that newspapers specialize in local sports and community coverage. The Pew study¹⁴ reports that one-third of adults now get their news via Internet and believe this source more trustworthy than television.

In other words, users are opting for the Internet in greater numbers, but when they do watch TV news it is increasingly on cable, especially CNBC, MSNBC and Fox.¹⁵ This is significant for future PA and media planning and programming. This does not mean, however, that TV is critically wounded and newspapers are dead. It does mean that television and the media are in a vast technological switchover to the next generation of home and public communications. The Internet even now analyzes news that has been posted on the net. Newspapers and television stations, in response, advertise and post their Internet services. Failure of the media and the PA planner to recognize these trend lines will bring unfortunate consequences. For instance, the Pew Research Center also shows that the American public in general is losing its taste for news across all media. Television news, as a result, is being cut back with less coverage and fewer bureaus.

The Pentagon will obviously continue to staff a pressroom, as will the White House and the Congress with its press galleries. But there will be changes of substance introduced into the system. There will likely be fewer field reporters and more Net providers. Over time, there will likely be fewer human contacts between media representatives and government officials (except in the case of Congress), because there will exist an enormous amount of information in data banks and on such Internet

sites as the "Thomas" database of the Library of Congress. In fact, there might well be overload. More and more the Internet will become the medium of choice as the younger computer-literate generation ages.

Television, in this writer's view, will slowly shrink in terms of overall viewership, since within the decade non-news television production will be directed toward audiences lacking computer skills, lacking serious interest in news, who are essentially interested only in entertainment or sports.

This doesn't mean that television or radio news coverage will disappear, but it will be realigned. There will be more reporters working web sites and Internet outlets, and probably fewer covering standard press conferences or "live" segments from the White House and other such news centers. There will be multiple opportunities for people to catch breaking news through a variety of hand-or-wrist computers with net capabilities.

In this changed environment, the media will have to juggle "up front and in tight" live interviews and coverage against the availability of large amounts of Internet background information. And never forget mass communications is a "for profit" industry. Decision makers and PA specialists, aware of these changes, can front-load background information onto the Internet and concentrate on the "sound bite," the image, and the perception. Internet audiences are not the same as the general population. Andrew Kohut of the Pew Research Center estimates that perhaps only 20 percent of the viewing, reading, or listening public can be considered well informed on military and foreign affairs.¹⁶

Survey research data also reflect the suspicion that the public does not become seriously engaged in an issue until it must, as, for example, in the runup to a presidential election or in the particulars surrounding a defense system cost overrun.¹⁷

In this emerging communications environment, tighter competition is developing. With the computer

and the Internet, decision makers, media outlets, and individuals have more communications techniques available to them to be used as needed. For decision and policy makers and their staffs, availability of these electronic techniques is a positive opportunity to be proactive and can be exploited. Government departments (such as OUSD (AT&L) or the Defense Acquisition University (DAU)) already use the web for disseminating needed information or posting updates for DoD's contractor base.

It would be a small step to put positive stories about major or minor weapons systems into circulation or to offer a PM for interview.

Special interests and lobbyists¹⁸ can and do use these same techniques on behalf of clients. From web fundraising to chat room topics to interviews, news releases, commentaries and Question and Answer sessions, the process goes on 24-hours-a-day. In today's world, to vacate such an electronic field is to lose the battle for a balanced and fair hearing in the face of constantly changing public opinion.

Decision and policy makers should use all the new computer PA techniques to tell the story directly without necessarily going through a press intermediary. The important principle is to stay the course and not fall behind the technologies available.

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Chapter 8

Decision Making in an Age of Instant Communications

- **Prelude to Tomorrow**
- **Defense Systems Acquisition Decision Making and Public Affairs: Where Does it Fit?**
- **How to Relate to the Media**
- **The Need to Include Media Planning in Defense Systems Acquisition Decision Making**

8

DECISION MAKING IN AN AGE OF INSTANT COMMUNICATIONS

Prelude to Tomorrow

In interviewing former and present defense reporters for this guide, they were united in believing that tomorrow's wars would be as different as World War II was from World War I. One highly experienced and respected government PA officer described the new forms of warfare as an "information blitzkrieg"¹ which he defined as a lightning-surprise strike against the United States and certain allies, initiated by disruptions of electro-magnetic grids and satellite, computer and communications operations, accompanied by carefully planned use of weapons of mass destruction before an adequate U.S. response can be mounted.

Naturally this scenario can be critiqued. There is, however, a significant acquisition community component in this equation. Today, it is necessary to make certain that close technical and production ties exist between OUSD (AT&L), the media and American industry.

Such a vast logistics array spread over the world should be an attractive object of media interest and attention. The system spends large sums of taxpayer money; it often involves huge competitive contractual awards with many subcontractors. Given the monies available and the competitive intensity of the defense systems acquisition process, it is surprising to note the lack of major media attention with its potential for frequent headlines.

In many instances, acquisition stories are local or regional, covered as such by the media. Barring scandal or political infighting, national media

interest in acquisition problems is relatively selective and is usually reported in technical or professional publications and magazines. They are not normally the stuff of page-one stories or evening news shows. However, this environment does not mean that PMs and senior officials should adopt the feeling, "Relax, all is well." That attitude might have been permissible before the arrival of the modern Information Age. Today, however, a disgruntled employee or rejected contractor, not waiting for established appeal channels to work, can get on the Internet or send e-mail messages to any and all who might listen and some who won't. It is that one message, true or false, that can bring trouble.

In a wired world, acquisition, PA and the media are locked in a 21st Century embrace, sometimes fitfully, but always there. OUSD (AT&L) has little option but to consummate the marriage. Divorce is not a viable option.

Defense Systems Acquisition Decision Making and Public Affairs: Where Does it Fit?

"The defense acquisition system provides the framework for the acquisition of weapons, information technology systems (IT), and other items used by the DoD to meet threats to national security."²

Acquisition is an amazingly diverse and complex system that includes research, design, development, test and evaluation, production, logistics, and support. It annually consumes about \$180 billion (now more) of the defense budget and represents a

complicated arrangement of relationships among the White House, Congress, industry, DoD and the military Services. It is difficult to imagine the inner workings of this intricate process. It involves large multi-year contracts, tailored defense needs and political issues — all varied, often competing — plus Congressional interests, constituent demands, and, of course, the finely honed competitive edge of industry.

The process represents an enormous challenge to defense systems acquisition decision makers. Over time, a system has evolved that not only acquires “tried-and-tested” products at “best cost,” but a system within which all the various interests can work.

Defense systems acquisition represents the starting point for the development and production of America’s military infrastructure, upon which ultimately rests the nation’s ability to defend itself.

It is the defense systems acquisition leadership’s responsibility, from Under Secretary to professional institutions, such as the DAU, to ensure that the system runs well, reforms and upgrades itself periodically, and maintains an efficient operation. Naturally, when media trouble sounds the alarm, PAOs are integral to the system. In today’s real-time world that, however, may be too late. The dialogue should start early, be continuous, and result in planning for whatever media issues eventually develop.

Today, defense systems acquisition has acquired a role in the national security structure that is new and critical. Acquisition plays a central role in providing the means for the United States to procure new instruments of war. Defense systems acquisition is responsible for providing the technology and equipment for the new battlefield. This ongoing development plus the continuing need to cut costs is responsible for the acquisition processes that will help restructure warfare as we know it, from logistics delivery systems and computerization, to satellites and cyber war.

This significant change opens up all manner of potential media interest. The media are aware there may be no time for future mobilization and deployment, as contrasted to the Gulf War, for example. Forces will have to be equipped and ready from the outset, according to strategic thinkers.³ This reality challenges the acquisition system to be ready. That in itself is a good media story with the first question being, “Are you ready?”

This scenario or something like it strongly suggests that defense systems acquisition decision makers at all levels need to be aggressive, proactive, and up front in representing their case. Gone are the days when DoD could routinely keep a low profile believing that the less said the better. In today’s real-time news, abetted by the Internet, there is a constant and crucial need for PA overview. Program managers, however, should not be afraid of mistakes, and although this is a tough idea to sell, there is no such thing as a “zero defects command.” Ask any reporter.

If acquisition, for example, knows of a problem, such as the relatively recent fraud case involved in the manufacture of chemical warfare protective gear, or the 1991 Air Force Ground Wave Emergency Network Program and community opposition to it, face the issue immediately. Involve PA and a solution can be worked out jointly. Be factual, accurate, honest, and get the story out. The skills required here on the part of the PA/acquisition team are essentially the same used by the media in developing a story.

As the acquisition process becomes better known to the public and the general media, there is a wise rule of thumb to remember: “When you read the daily papers, study how the press grasps the situation and, armed with this perception, you are better able to prepare answers.”⁴

How to Relate to the Media

The world has entered the information and computer age with an extraordinary impact on

communications, and this, as AT&T and Microsoft among others reflect, is just the beginning. For example, it is much easier today for the media to bring up data and information through Lexus-Nexus terminals, the Internet and the thousands of web pages maintained by both government and private sectors. The military must be alert to the insatiable need of media outlets for news stories, occasionally even when based on hearsay, gossip, and frustration. This condition has already given rise to so-called information disseminators, such as Matthew Drudge, who have built careers on tips that perhaps may not be true, but certainly force the attention of competitive mainstream media. The military cannot be caught unprepared reacting to such “news source” challenges.

The availability of significant new, low-cost technologies (making global, personal and governmental communications information available) may actually present an opportunity for both media and the military to reassess mutual attitudes and problems.

The game — and it is a deadly serious game — has changed. Carrying the old suspicions and resentments into new political and military environments is dangerous and self-defeating. There is an old saying in journalism: “Don’t start a fight with the guy who owns a printing press. You can’t win.” This adage remains sound advice. With avenues of communications wide open to the military and the media, new approaches, developed by both sides, seem in order. Close holds on news are certainly non-productive, given the alternative channels of communication now available from old fashioned “leaks” to chat rooms, the web and the worrisome role of “hackers.”

This new awareness must be spread to all levels of the military structure because the harsh truth is: military PA finds it harder and harder to control or even to be aware of information flow. Failure to do so subjects the military to all sorts of criticism. A working model of how an organization can relate to the media is not always studied. But we

have available the White House model (see also Chapter 6). Without being judgmental or racking up wins and losses, the White House Office of Communications and the operations of the presidential press secretary represent today the most advanced form of public communications and political information dissemination available to a wired world. Not only do data flow to the point of overload, but information flows for the most part in a calculated, processed and controlled fashion to media outlets the world over on a 24-hour news basis. The operation has been linked to a “war room” where all the tricks of the political communications trade are employed in news dissemination, from spinning to shading, from staying “on message” to creating imagery and photo opportunities. Vague, self-serving and misleading statements are sometimes utilized to further political goals or national security and foreign policy objectives as, for example, in the cases of a National Missile Defense Program or the combat readiness of U.S. Forces.

In other words, the modern PA/media office is not just a place where reporters get handouts or attend press conferences. It is in effect a command post capable of reacting instantly and aggressively in order to advance agendas, party lines, international positions or threats (in the author’s view, more public diplomacy is practiced over cable television and PA talk shows than realized).

This new approach is made necessary by the huge audiences modern communications command with televised point-and-counterpoint seen perhaps by 70 million Americans daily, not to mention millions abroad viewing CNN, as in the case of the U.S.-China incident over reconnaissance aircraft flights. The very presence of vast listener, viewer, readership audiences bespeaks the need for senior officers, not just PAOs, to pay attention.

For example, a print reporter or TV network learns of a possible scandal in a DoD acquisition program that is national in scope as, for example, the 1966 case of A. Ernest Fitzgerald and the Minuteman

Missile program.⁵ The standard “no comment” or “the case is being reviewed” or worse yet “the matter is in litigation and we cannot comment” simply won’t do. It usually results in the minds of reporters as highly suspicious creating an unintended perception of “if that’s their answer, they must be guilty.” Like it or not, that’s what audiences generally believe in their own private lives. In a History Channel documentary, “The Curse of Power” (23 July 2000), Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy is quoted as saying, “It’s not what you are; it’s what people think you are.” This is a principle of political reality.

More reality must be introduced to cope with credibility. If not, it is often painful, embarrassing or threatening to the organization involved. But to drag out or deny a story is no answer. With the media’s nose for investigating trouble spots, it is far better to be candid, and get the bad news out fast, as President Kennedy did in the “Bay of Pigs” disaster in 1961. It defused the story as to whom was responsible before it gathered “legs” or sustainability. In fact, if you anticipate bad news and get it out first despite the potential risks, you have captured the initiative. The first hint of bad news should be your side of the issue; or as White House correspondents see it, “They put their spin on it.”

One area neglected in press operations by officials (e.g., PMs) who deal with policy substance or with weapons systems programs is the reluctance at times to understand the media. Understanding the professional pressures of time, deadlines, and attitudes of journalists who cover your program or area of responsibility can be to your advantage in dealing with media inquiries.

Of equal importance is the practical need to know something about the reporters covering you. Given the usual tensions, it is not surprising that defense officials often shy away from initiating close relations with reporters who cover military affairs. But there are several reasons for getting to know reporters. First, a media relationship between a

reporter and a PM leads to better understanding of each other’s attitudes and jobs, to better human relations, and to a possible friendship which pays long-term dividends, depending on personality and chemistry. At the very least, a PM and a reporter can have a substantive exchange without ending up on “page-one.” Speaking “off the record,” if feasible, an official can usually make an interview easier. It allows a more candid detailing of the issue at hand, even though the story cannot be used under the rules. The reporter may not be happy because he needs a timely story, not something he can’t use immediately, but it allows him to better understand the situation. Most significant of all in a military-media relationship is the cultivation of confidence and trust that could serve to form a future friendship. If a PM or office director, for example, is called by a young unknown reporter from a local television station asking about a cost overrun that a DoD inspector general’s investigator is checking out, you could very easily put him or her off. The reporter still needs the story for the evening news slot and, if possible, he will get it wherever possible. The information thus gained may well be inaccurate or incorrect. This does not help.

If, on the other hand, you have known the reporter for some time, have visited with him or her, and shared positive news about your project, then the above conversation probably would never take place. Instead, you have explained the situation, its background and the framework within which you have to work. Knowing you gives the reporter a “heads up,” and a disposition to trust you and to believe you are credible. This is an enormous psychological advantage and should be carefully nurtured. The White House learned this lesson long ago. It has been institutionalized for years in the personage of now retired United Press reporter, Helen Thomas, who because of seniority always got to ask the first question at a presidential press conference.

A final useful technique is to incorporate into command briefings a series of points to handle the

media proactively on matters of concern to the project. Inserting PA planning into project management or acquisition planning and programming makes common sense. Finally, it should be emphasized that such approaches should always include the staff PAO or the command PAO. It is the PAO's responsibility not only to protect the command from blindsiding, but also to be knowledgeable about local and national media representation.

The Need to Include Media Planning in Defense Systems Acquisition Decision Making

There is apparently no mandated procedure in the defense systems acquisition world that requires ongoing professional interchanges and working relationships designed to bring PA and the media routinely into the acquisition continuum.

The former Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology & Logistics) fully understood this need when he told this interviewer, "Acquisition needs a faster response to Service requirements than ever before. Twenty years ago, we had a military-industrial base. Today, everything has changed, speeded up. We buy more commercial items because of the new information technologies and the technical changes that come down every 18 months. The military needs the material now and needs quite different things on faster schedules."

"Warfare has changed and so must we," he continued. "These changes cover the spectrum of modern warfare, from bio-chemical defense to information and cyber warfare. Acquisition is now on the cutting edge of readiness. Homeland Defense has acquired importance and OUSD (AT&L) is not only engaged in making certain the military has the right equipment, but acquisition, along with the security agencies, now must pay attention to stopping technical penetration of our critical defense systems."⁶

"Not only do we have more to do more quickly," the Under Secretary concluded, "we must also be

aware that we must tell our story to the public. We are not about waste, fraud and abuse or the idea that bad news is good news. We are about telling our story in a positive manner, accurately and proactively. We want and need PA involvement, and we need to make our program managers and, in fact, all of acquisition personnel aware of how to incorporate PA into our planning and how to relate to the media in a proactive, aggressive manner."⁷

Political decision making, media relations and public controversy do not make for good bedfellows. Often DoD and Service PAOs accidentally become participants in arguments with no easy way out and no satisfactory solution evident.

To illustrate, early in 2000, a well-known M.I.T. physicist, a specialist in missile technology, sent the White House a detailed criticism of the Administration's conceptual plan to build a national missile defense system. Three months later, the professor received a letter routinely thanking him for his efforts and outlining Administration policy. This apparent put-down of the professor's analysis angered him, and he wrote the White House chief of staff that the White House staff had not taken its responsibilities seriously. To this charge, the chief of staff responded, "Your brilliance is only exceeded by your arrogance."

The cat was now well out of the bag. Elements of the American scientific community, including 50 Nobel laureates, went public defending the professor's critique; the Pentagon classified the M.I.T. professor's initial letter, and Defense Security Service agents warned him about divulging sensitive material. To which action, and as a testy response, the professor once more wrote the White House chief of staff, "I do not rule out that I could be wrong...and that there is some subtle point of basic science...known only to you and your advisors, but not to Nobel laureates."⁸

The story was a front-page lead in the *Boston Globe* and was updated in a *60 Minutes* segment. As of

early 2001, there had been no satisfactory reply to the physicist, but the Administration was winding down, Pentagon public affairs, the Office of the Secretary of Defense and, at some point, OUSD (AT&L) — were all unintentionally drawn into the situation, a no-win situation. Only a change in Administration apparently put this embarrassing incident to an uneasy rest.

This is a story that started as private correspondence, grew into angry exchanges with perhaps an unnecessary official reaction, and became public knowledge (with several DoD offices involved, with no final solution in sight except silence).

Situations like this one reflect the critical need for cooperation among government entities and full exchanges between action officers in concerned agencies and relevant defense offices, among them PA, as soon as anyone suspects the issue is going public.

This is a real, if not an easy, case with which to cope. It assumes trust, credibility, and an “early warning alert,” which in this instance was lacking. There usually is no winner in such circumstances.

The political sensitivity of decision making in the government and certainly in DoD, where there is negative media fallout, is nowhere better illustrated than in the politically delicate issue of the 1998 round of base closings (BRAC).

George C. Wilson reports in his investigative book, *This War Really Matters*, that the White House was pressuring DoD, and specifically the Air Force, to award a contract for depot work to a private aerospace firm and thus save jobs at two BRAC’ed airbases. But the contract had to be won competitively to be legal, thus a search for a second competitor. Wilson covered the hearing on this issue held by the House National Security Military Personnel Subcommittee. When a leaked memo surfaced at the hearing indicating White House interest, Wilson reported that House Subcommittee members reacted angrily to the memo arguing that

it reflects “another way” the Administration was planning “to circumvent the law.” One member said, “This memo brings the Administration down to a new low in credibility.”

The argument continued for some time, ultimately involving senior defense officials including the USD (AT&L) and the Secretary of the Air Force. According to George Wilson, one subcommittee member even suggested, “...others talk about fair and open competition. And yet sometimes we find out things that are ongoing in the funny building across the river there.”

At one point, the USD (AT&L) said he personally had no contact with the White House on this matter. He reminded the subcommittee his office had the responsibility for making the competition “fair and open.”⁹

The story went out on the wire with strong play in the airbases’ regions. This is the sort of complex situation that can and does cause problems for both PA and the substantive area concerned; in this case, the USAF and OUSD (AT&L). Yet, because of Congressional and Administration interest and prestige, the official response had to be carefully planned, reviewed, coordinated, and issued. Not an easy task. Situations like this occur regularly in Washington, a city whose middle name is politics.

A prudent lesson learned from these complex political-military-media cases is perhaps best summed up in the caustic remark of a former Army Chief of PA, “The media are like alligators....We don’t have to like them, but we do have to feed them.”¹⁰

As we reach the end of this short guide, purposely written from the mass communications point of view, it has become evident to the author that something very significant has been happening in the acquisition world over the past several years.

It’s called change. It’s also called reform, and it is taking hold. Three years ago in a conversation

between a DoD career acquisition specialist, a senior defense contractor and this writer, the question was posed, “What’s new in this acquisition reform thing?” The response was unremarkable, standard for that time period, “Nothing. More of the same, lots of new software, plenty of print-outs, but just another organizational plan. It’s not going anywhere.” The contractor agreed.

But it has gone somewhere in the view of this writer, despite the cynicism. Thirty years ago, the acquisition process and logistics were the domain of an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, hardly central to the core acquisition decision-making process.

This has now changed, matured one might say. Former Under Secretary Dr. Jacques Gansler in his above-mentioned interview made two quite important observations. First, “Cost is now a military requirement.”¹¹ And it is. Given downsizing, continuous deployments; the need to recapitalize the inventory and reinvigorate the Force; to move on to the next generation of weapons and research — cost is a major factor in the acquisition calculus.

Second, Vice President Dick Cheney, former Secretary of Defense and retired vice chairman of the JCS, Admiral William Owens, USN, have estimated that DoD will require an extra \$150 billion over the next five years to close the gap between what is in the inventory and what is needed.¹² This is an extraordinary challenge for defense systems acquisition to face.

Even more so is the reality reflected in Dr. Gansler’s observation, reported earlier, that OUSD (AT&L) now finds itself at the center of critical defense needs requiring timely high-level decisions. A very prophetic view, as evidenced by our current “war on terrorism.”

This new requirement stands as a vital mission of the acquisition community. It means, in terms of this guide, a requirement to link and integrate the functions of defense systems acquisition with the functions of public affairs. A DoD endeavor costing some \$180 billion annually with the potential of billions more in the out-years is certain to attract media and public attention. It is my view that such a development is inevitable, and the sooner the acquisition community and, for that matter, the contractor base address the issue, the faster appropriate communications reforms and strategies can be initiated throughout the system.

In this context, OASD (PA) today places emphasis on accuracy, not speed. “What PA does in its operations hasn’t fundamentally changed, but how we do it has.”¹³

Future warfare, Dr. Eric Newton, news historian of the Newseum suggests, may well involve “digital jihads.”¹⁴ If it does, this poses very large problems for both acquisition and PA communities.

There remains one question in the evolution of 21st Century acquisition planning. “Are we ready?”

ENDNOTES

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Interviews

INTERVIEWS

MEDIA:

Syd Davis, former bureau chief, NBC TV Washington, later Program Manager, Voice of America.

Thomas De Frank, former White House Correspondent, *Newsweek*, Bureau Chief, *New York Daily News*, Washington, DC.

Reed Irvine, Chairman, "Accuracy in Media," Washington, DC.

Barrett McGurn, former President, Overseas Press Club, Author, former Foreign Editor and Chief European Correspondent, *New York Herald Tribune*; Chief, Public Information Office, U.S. Supreme Court.

Frank Getlein, Author, columnist, *Washington Star*, *Commonwealth* and *New Republic* magazines. Drama Critic, National Public Radio.

David Martin, Pentagon Correspondent, CBS News.

Martin Walker, *The Guardian* papers, London.

Barry Zorthian, former CEO, Time-Life Radio/TV.

DOD:

Ken Bacon, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs).

Dr. Jacques Gansler, Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology and Logistics).

RADM Jimmy Finkelstein USN (Ret), former CHINFO, U.S. Navy, former PAO to the Secretary of the Navy.

COL Charles H. Davidson USAR, C.O., 2nd Psyops Group, Fort Bragg, NC.

MAJ Daniel J. Callan USAF (Ret), USAF Research Lab, Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, OH.

GOVERNMENT:

Joe Gordon, Deputy Director, External Affairs, NASA, Kennedy Space Center, FL.

Brian Chase, former Press Aide to Congressman Dave Weldon, (R-FL).

Albert Di Marcantonio, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary Defense (Space Integration).

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Kristen McSwain, Program Officer, IRI (International Republican Institute), Washington, DC.

Marianne Holt, Senior Associate, The Center for Public Integrity, Washington, DC.

Andrew Kohut, the Pew Research Center for People and the Press, Washington, DC.

Eric Newton, News Historian, Newseum, Rosslyn, VA.

Karlyn Bowman, Survey Specialist, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC.

Nicolas Negroponte, MIT Media Lab, Cambridge, MA.

Robert Lichter, President, Center for Media and Public Affairs, Washington, DC.

Tom Rosenthal, "Project for Excellence in Journalism," Washington, DC.

Thomas Korologos, Timmons and Company, Washington, DC.

INDUSTRY:

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J. Joseph Fisher, Executive Vice President, BNF Industries, Alexandria, VA.

Frank Childs, Vice-President and Director, Product Manufacturing, MCK Communications, Boston, MA.

Christopher Riley, President, Information Tool Designers, Cambridge, MA.

Alan L. Freed, President, Alan L. Freed Associates, Alexandria, VA.

Carlos Chavez, Dean, Computer University at Sea, Crystal Cruises, Los Angeles, CA.

RADM Thomas A. Brooks USN (Ret), President, AT&T Technical Services Co., Washington, DC.

SITES VISITED:

USAF Human Factors Lab. Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, OH

National Press Club, Washington, DC.

Overseas Press Club, New York City, NY.

Naval War College, Newport, RI.

Orlando Sentinel, Orlando, FL.

VOA newsroom, Washington, DC.

WGBH (PBS), Boston, MA.

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